

# BEING

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THAT

# WITH

TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

# JESUS

WRITTEN BY

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# **BEING WITH JESUS**

*a framework for  
leadership development*

**Ivan Green**

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## **Introduction**

The need for a new leadership development model has never been greater.

The secular business world already gets it.

*“Companies of all sorts realise that to survive in today’s volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, they need leadership skills and organisational capabilities different from those that helped them succeed in the past.”<sup>1</sup>*

Unfortunately, the Church is playing catch-up, assuming we’re even playing the game. In 1976, Ted Engstrom made the point that “Leadership development is the key to meaningful development of modern society and the effective future of the Christian church in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Some decades later, I would suggest that, in parts of the world, the Church’s future is at stake precisely because we *haven’t* made leadership development a priority.

It’s an extraordinary situation, especially when we realise that Jesus has already given his Church the ideal leadership development model.

And I believe the world needs what we’ve got.

*Being With Jesus* explores how Jesus chose a few ordinary men to be his apprentices and transformed them into the apostles that turned the world upside down.

In the following pages, we'll unpack some of the reasons why Jesus chose those twelve men in the first place and the methods he used to train and equip them individually and collectively for the apostleship.

And, as you read this little book, I hope you will discover the opportunity for you and your organisation to partner with “the Lord of the harvest” in raising up and sending out the workers he needs for his fields.<sup>3</sup>

Because the fields are already ripe for harvest.<sup>4</sup>

Ivan Green

*Leadership Coach &  
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## Part 1

# **Identifying & Recruiting Potential Leaders**

## Chapter 1

# The Disciples' Journey

*All apostles are disciples, but not all disciples are apostles. This role is reserved for a chosen few.*

— Greg Ogden

Jesus is the ultimate leader developer. He chose twelve ordinary, uneducated men from Galilee who, barring Judas Iscariot, would turn the world upside down because “they had been with Jesus.”<sup>5</sup>

When those twelve ordinary men began their journey with Jesus, they could not have anticipated the spiritual transformation that would take place within them.<sup>6</sup> Especially when it is claimed that each one started out being ignorant, narrowminded, superstitious, and full of prejudice, misconceptions, and animosity.<sup>7</sup>

I'm sure such a brutal character assessment would cause most Christian leaders to think twice before offering someone a

leadership development opportunity. Yet, remarkably, Jesus saw beyond these deficiencies and, no doubt, others.

In Chapter Two, we will attempt to understand what it was that Jesus saw in these men and why that matters when it comes to identifying potential leaders for our organisations.

Firstly, it's helpful to draw a rough sketch of the journey these twelve men went on, starting with the seemingly unremarkable way Jesus called them to follow him.

## **Three Stages of the Disciples' Journey**

When Jesus called the disciples, those we know about lived very ordinary lives. Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen.<sup>8</sup> James and John were fishermen also, who helped their Father with the family business.<sup>9</sup>

Matthew was collecting taxes for the Romans.<sup>10</sup> While Simon the Zealot, we assume, was a political activist, perhaps working with other zealots to overthrow the Romans.<sup>11</sup>

Notably, these and the other men who would later become the Twelve were not immediately called by Jesus to be apostles (i.e., leaders). In fact, the only time we get a sense of what Jesus had in mind for these men was when Jesus promised to make Simon a fisher of people.<sup>12</sup> <sup>13</sup>And after seeing what Jesus had just done with the fish, it seemed that was all the encouragement Simon needed.



Otherwise, it could almost be said that the calling of each disciple was remarkably ordinary, perhaps much like their lives. For example, in Luke's account, Andrew and another soon-to-be-former disciple of John the Baptist were curious about Jesus. They were subsequently invited to see where Jesus was staying.<sup>14</sup>

Jesus found Phillip in Galilee and said, "Come, follow me."<sup>15</sup> Phillip then found Nathaniel and urged him to come and meet Jesus. Matthew was at work when Jesus saw him and said, "follow me and be my disciple"<sup>16</sup> (notably, not be my apostle). And curiously, we don't even know how the other members of the Twelve became followers of Jesus.

Yet, although seemingly ordinary, the invitation from Jesus was an extraordinary first step on the disciple's journey to apostleship. Because each would-be apostle was invited to first become an acquaintance of Jesus<sup>17</sup> before having to decide whether they would become an apprentice of Jesus.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the twelve disciples arrived at their final intimate relationship with Jesus only by degrees, with "three stages in the history of their fellowship with Him being distinguishable."<sup>19</sup> Notably, two of the three stages of the Twelve's discipleship journey were before Jesus even selected them for training to become apostles.

## **Stage 1 – “Come and See”**

Although Jesus used the words “follow me” when he called those who would become the Twelve, it is fair to say that he was actually inviting them to “come and see.” Jesus’ call to them was an invitation to become acquainted with him, to see what he was about, and to begin their journey as “seekers or inquirers.”<sup>20</sup>

Significantly, this invitation was not exclusively for the Twelve. At one point, Jesus had at least 72 disciples<sup>21</sup> out of the multitudes who followed him. So, in fact, the invitation of Jesus was an invitation for everyone. Even today, He offers an opportunity for his authenticity and identity to leave a growing impression<sup>22</sup> on anyone willing to accept his invitation.

## **Stage 2 – “Follow Me”**

If stage one of the disciple’s journey was an invitation to become acquainted with Jesus, stage two was characterised by a summons that demanded a decision: “Follow me.”<sup>23</sup>

This stage began with Jesus defining the nature of the relationship and what being a committed follower meant. “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”<sup>24</sup>

When Jesus made this statement, the Twelve were still part of the larger group who had responded to the specific yet corporate call to be one of Jesus' disciples.<sup>25</sup>

### **Stage 3 – “A Chosen Few”**

Stage three begins with Jesus naming the Twelve and calling them apostles.<sup>26</sup> For Jesus, this moment marked a shift from public ministry to a ministry of intentional training and development of the Twelve in anticipation of the cross. In other words, his new highest priority was to intentionally pour himself into these twelve men during his remaining months on earth.

For each of the Twelve, this moment marked a distinct transition from being one of many disciples to being one of a select few, each hand-picked to be a leader-in-training. No longer were they simply acquaintances of Jesus. Instead, each man was chosen to become an apprentice of Jesus.

I love how Greg Ogden describes the significance of this stage for a leadership development model. He writes, “any follower of Jesus is a disciple, but only twelve of these disciples are apostles. Another way to say it is that all apostles are disciples, but not all disciples are apostles. This role is reserved for a chosen few.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Reflection Time**

1. How might the “come and see” stage of the disciples’ journey relate to leadership development in your organisation?
2. Likewise, what might the “follow me” stage look like in your organisation?
3. What steps would you take to ensure you’ve chosen the right people – the “select few” – for leadership positions in your organisation?

## Chapter 2

# Twelve Ordinary Men

*The twelve entered on the last and highest stage of discipleship when they were chosen by their Master from the mass of His followers, and formed into a select band, to be trained for the great work of the apostleship.<sup>28</sup>*

— A.B. Bruce

When Jesus chose the twelve, I have no doubt that he did so with us in mind. Of course, His immediate priority was to select those who would become his apprentices and, thus, continue his mission once He returned to the Father. But I believe His intention was also to demonstrate how the Church today can partner with God, the “Lord of the Harvest”, in raising up and sending out workers into the harvest field.

Jesus chose twelve perfectly ordinary, unexceptional men.<sup>29</sup> They had no special abilities or outstanding talents, at least none we know about. They could not boast of having a list of accomplishments to strengthen their resumes, nor did they

necessarily have glowing reputations. They most certainly were not the elite. The twelve were, by and large, “poor, illiterate provincials, utterly devoid of social consequence.”<sup>30</sup> And if that wasn’t enough, these twelve “provincials” were Galileans and, as such, were objects of Jewish contempt.<sup>31</sup>

From the start of his public ministry, Jesus preached and lived the upside-down Kingdom of God, a kingdom with a “different values system”<sup>32</sup> to the world into which he came and, undoubtedly, a different values system to the world we live in today. So, on that basis, it would be easy to argue that anyone with exceptional talent or much-needed skills would effectively have no chance of being chosen. The collective backgrounds of the Twelve lend some credence to this suggestion, right?

And the highly educated, the accomplished, the wealthy and privileged, people with connections, or those from the “right” social groups (e.g., the cool kids). Would they have any chance of being chosen? Or do we overlook them as well?

Not at all. On the contrary, as A.B. Bruce puts it, “if any rabbi, rich man, or ruler had been willing to yield himself unreservedly to the service of the kingdom, no objection would have been taken to him on account of his acquirements, possessions, or titles.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, the gifted, the connected, the rich or the educated are as eligible as anyone if they are willing to commit their lives wholeheartedly to serving Jesus and his mission.

Still, Jesus chose twelve men who were, to put it plainly, just like the rest of us: unworthy and unqualified.<sup>34</sup> And He did so for one

good reason. Because by choosing the humble, the lowly, the meek and the weak, there would never be any question about the source of power when their lives would ultimately change the world.<sup>35</sup>

That said, the twelve disciples did have redeeming qualities, some distinguishing characteristics, that help to explain why Jesus chose them over other candidates. Undoubtedly, Jesus saw the individual qualities and strengths (and flaws) of each member of the Twelve. However, at this point, we're only considering collective attributes that characterise the cohort.

Of course, it's difficult to determine the full array of collective qualities that Jesus saw in the Twelve. But the following are the most prominent and, by extension, the most relevant.

## **Teachability**

According to AB Bruce, the men Jesus chose to become apostles-in-training were fundamentally teachable. He writes, "Among the good elements discernible (in the disciples) are reverential awe in the presence of Divine Power, a prompt calling to mind of sin betraying tenderness of conscience (emphasis added), and an unfeigned self-humiliation on account of unmerited favour."<sup>36</sup>

This is a beautifully old-fashioned way of saying that the Twelve were, by default, willing to learn, to be corrected, and to be shaped by Jesus. They had nothing figured out, and they knew it.

Teachability is vital for any leader, but especially for potential leaders. Aubrey Malphurs proposes that “a lack of teachability is the potential leader’s cardinal sin.”<sup>37</sup> I would go further by saying that we’re wasting our time trying to develop someone unwilling to be teachable. Such people, deafened by their presuppositions and reinforced by a lack of humility, don’t listen and won’t grow.

Jesus, on the other hand, chose twelve men who were willing to learn and be transformed. Simply put, the Twelve were teachable because of their willingness to be with Jesus in utter openness and vulnerability.

## **Devotion to Jesus and His Mission**

In John’s gospel, we read the account of Jesus calling the first five disciples. At first glance, their response seems unnaturally sudden and mature. “They believe in Jesus on a moment’s notice, and they express their faith in terms which seem appropriate only to advanced Christian intelligence.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, the disciples of Jesus weren’t necessarily men of great faith or intelligence.

They were, however, men who had, perhaps for all their adult lives, anticipated the coming of the Messiah as promised in the Scriptures.<sup>39</sup> So that when they met Jesus, they saw someone who could be the Messiah they had been waiting for. Ultimately, as their discipleship journey continued, the Twelve became more and more “animated by a devotion to Jesus and to the divine kingdom which made them capable of any sacrifice.”<sup>40</sup>



And that's the point. Because according to Jesus, it doesn't matter what gifts, acquirements, possessions, connections, or titles a potential leader may have. The primary qualification for Christian leadership is a devotion to Jesus and His mission and a willingness to give up everything for the sake of the Kingdom – to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily and follow him.<sup>41</sup>

The faith of the twelve amounted to this: “that they recognised in Jesus the Divine Prophet, King, Son of Old Testament prophecy; and its value lay not in its maturity or accuracy, but in this, that however imperfect, it brought them into contact and close fellowship with Him.”<sup>42</sup>

## **The Twelve Were Ordained<sup>43</sup>**

We know that Jesus chose the twelve. One by one, he saw them, he named them, and he called them. However, we also know from Scripture that each man was given to Jesus by the Father (see John 17:6). The importance of this cannot be overstated. Because the primary characteristic of the Twelve was that they were hand-picked by God to be trained by Jesus for the apostleship.

Notably, the night before Jesus named the Twelve,<sup>44</sup> he went to a quiet place to spend time with his Father. How fascinating it would be to know what they talked about. One pastor interviewed for this project jokingly reckons Jesus might have said, “not this mob Father, surely.”

Nevertheless, these men were ordained, not due to completing years of college or undergoing a ritual that designated someone as a priest, minister, or pastor. Instead, the Twelve were predetermined and appointed by God the Father as the ones that Jesus would train and equip.

## **A Posture of Looking**

I should probably add, at this point, that these characteristics are just the starting point. They are foundational characteristics to look for as we identify, assess and select people for leadership development. And as the leader-in-training develops and matures, they will take on other characteristics, like those outlined by Paul in 1 Timothy 3 (and other epistles).

The lesson is this. From the outset, Jesus “adopted a posture of looking”<sup>45</sup> for anyone who may be a potential leader. He then chose those whom he could shepherd toward Biblical qualified-ness.<sup>46</sup>

The next chapter will consider how some of today’s churches and organisations approach leader development. Spoiler, it’s a bit ad hoc. But we’ll also discuss how Jesus’ example for identifying and recruiting potential leaders might change our approach.

## **Reflection Time**

1. What other collective characteristics are evident from what we know about the Twelve?
2. What individual qualities and attributes of the Twelve should we consider when choosing people for leadership development?
3. Who are the people in your organisation that are animated by their devotion to Jesus and his mission?
4. What does adopting a “posture of looking” mean for you and your organisation?