

Choosing Your Twelve

Mark 1:14-20

Introduction:

A British anthropologist, Robin Dunbar, and his colleagues examined historical, anthropological, and contemporary psychological data about group sizes, including how big groups get before they split off or collapse.

They found remarkable consistency around the number 150.

The results of their studies suggest that people only have enough emotional bandwidth for a certain number of buddies.

The average person has a limit to the number of friends and acquaintances he can maintain.

People move in and out of these layers, but the essence is that space must be carved out for any new connections.

According to the theory of “Dunbar’s number,” the tightest circle of relationships—classified as loved ones—has only five people.

Successive layers include 15 good friends, 50 friends, 150 meaningful contacts, 500 acquaintances, and 1500 people a person can recognize.

These numbers really represent a range.

Extroverts tend to have a larger network and spread themselves more thinly among their friends.

Introverts concentrate on a smaller network and more focused contacts.

Dunbar says, “What determines these layers in real life, in the face-to-face world...is the frequency at which you see people. You’re having to make a decision every day about how you invest what time you have available for social interaction, and that’s limited.”¹

“There is a balance between the amount of connections you have and the intimacy of those connections.”²

It makes sense that there is a finite number of friends most individuals can have.

“Face-to-face relationships, with all the non-verbal information that is so critical to communication, remain paramount.”³

Jesus chose twelve men, called them close to Him, and appointed them to be with Him and be sent out by Him (Mark 3:13-15).

Who would be in your twelve?

What would your twelve positively contribute?

I. Jesus invited “those whom He Himself wanted” (Mark 3:13).

Jesus invited two sets of brothers, four fishermen, to follow Him.

It is recorded that Jesus said to the first set, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).

He called the other brothers (Mark 1:19 and 20).

Peter was introduced to Jesus by his brother, Andrew (John 1:40-41).

He walked on water when he bravely got out of the boat (Matthew 14:28-29).

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20191001-dunbars-number-why-we-can-only-maintain-150-relationships>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

He declared that Jesus “is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:13-20).

He inquired about things there were on the minds of others also.

In Matthew 15:15, “Peter said, ‘Explain the parable to us.’”

He asked, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” (Matthew 18:21).

Peter wanted to know the disciple's reward, so said to Jesus, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” (Matthew 19:27).

When Jesus delivered a parable about watchfulness, Peter asked, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?” (Luke 12:41).

Regarding Jesus' departure, Peter asked, “Lord, where are You going?” and “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” (John 13:36 and 37).

After Jesus predicted that Peter would someday die a martyr's death by crucifixion, Peter asked about the kind of death John would experience; “Lord, and what about this man?” (John 21:21).

Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, but when John pointed out the Lamb of God, Andrew started following the One for whom John was sent to prepare the way (John 1:35-40). He also went to tell Peter, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41).

James and John were brothers who wanted positions of prominence but when they were promised suffering instead, neither of them turned away from following Jesus (Mark 10:35-40).

Philip brought inquiring Greeks to see Jesus (John 12:20-22).

Jesus praised Bartholomew/Nathanael, saying, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit”—shrewdness as demonstrated by being skilled in deception (John 1:47)!

Thomas looked for empirical evidence of Jesus' resurrection (John 20:24 and 25) and when it was provided, he accepted the evidence (vv. 26-28)!

Matthew the tax collector gathered others in his home to meet with Jesus (Matthew 9:9-13).

James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, followed Jesus without any “claim-to-fame” if you will.

Judas Iscariot was chosen for a reason or purpose, and when many withdrew from walking with Jesus, Judas remained with Him (John 6:66-71).

Jesus chose “those whom He Himself wanted” and called them into a relationship with Him and one another.

When Jesus calls me will I go to Him?

II. Jesus trained those who came to Him (Mark 3:13-14).

“And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him.”

They spent three-plus years living, eating, working, praying, and resting together.

They saw Him do miracles. They heard His teachings. They watched how people responded variously and how lives were changed.

They witnessed His compassion, restraint, mercy, faithfulness, love, and sacrifice.

They practiced what they learned and reported back.

Jesus prepared His apostles for ministry to others by training them (John 6:1-15).

(vv. 1-9) He taught them to see people in need and work to meet their needs.

(vv. 10-13) He taught them to give thanks to God the Father, from whom blessings flow.

(vv. 14-15) He taught them to focus on the job at hand.

Jesus trained His twelve so they would be prepared to go out on their own.

He tested His students to know where they were in development.

He required more of the students than what they had been given. They were to use what they knew and apply it.

He armed His students with resources—people needing help, food for a meal, a connection to God, and a means to not lose anything gained.

Jesus involved His students in this ministry opportunity.

He nurtured the students to see, think, reason, plan, prepare, work, and focus.

How much time have you spent with Jesus?

III. Jesus sent “out to preach” those who came and trained (Mark 3:14).

Jesus sent them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

He also said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and about 3,000 were added to the number of those who had repented and were baptized (v. 38).

Peter and John boldly taught and preached about Jesus resulting in their arrest, but the number of believing men increased to about 5,000 (Acts 4:4).

The religious rulers, elders, scribes, and high priest questioned Peter and John; “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Are you able to be sent out to preach?

Application:

God’s strategy has been to invite everyone, train those who do come, then send them out to invite others.

Who would be in your twelve?

Being one who has answered the call, who is being trained, and being sent out, I need people among my chosen influencers who will help me be a fisher of men.

I need people who will ask questions for understanding,
people who will advance in their faith, people who include others,
people who do not shy away from suffering for Christ,
people who will help me see Jesus,
people who will speak the truth and neither lie nor deceive,
people who will work with the evidence that does exist and believe in Him,
people who will change themselves and bring others to Jesus to be changed,
people who will simply follow Jesus faithfully,

and people who will remind me that I must be careful how I live because I cannot serve two masters, my heart is shaped by where my treasures are laid up, and “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

Conclusion:

Would you make someone else’s list?

Are you living in such a way that someone would choose you to be in their most intimate circle of influencers and followers?

Have you answered the invitation of Jesus to be in a relationship with Him?

By the preaching of the Gospel Jesus is inviting.

By the study and meditation upon God’s Word, Jesus is training.

By His commandments, Jesus is sending.

If you are ready to respond in obedient faith, repenting of sin and being baptized to have your sins washed away, and start a relationship with Jesus the Christ then come.

If your relationship with Jesus needs to be restored (Galatians 6:1), come.

The Lord’s invitation is for you.