

Fulfill the Law of Christ

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The sons of Zebedee, along with their father, owned a fishing business that employed other fishermen (**Matthew 4:18–22**). Thomas, Nathaniel, and Philip seem to also have worked as fishermen, for they were among those out in the boats when Jesus appeared on the shore after his resurrection (**John 21:2–8**).

Perhaps, to become proficient in the fishing industry would not have required a great deal of formal education. However, as young Jewish boys in their time, they would have been instructed to become literate and competent in the Holy Scriptures. Their other skills, strength, and mental acuity for their work as fishermen would have been developed by apprenticing to their fathers or other leaders in the profession.

Matthew (who is also called “Levi” by Luke) was a tax collector. Most likely, he would have required more specific education than those named above, as well as having to build a reputation for his job. Perhaps more than the others, Matthew would have been well-off financially because tax collectors earned their living by taking a portion of what they collected as their wages. The Roman oppressors employed them, and they profited from that, which tended to make these tax collectors very unpopular among their fellow Jews. This disdain for the “Tax Man” was, of course, enhanced by the fact that many tax collectors were unscrupulous in their work. Not all were. It was possible to be an honest, trustworthy, compassionate, and godly man while still being a tax collector. The information we have about Zacchaeus tells us that. Maybe Matthew was of that sort, also?

We know that Simon (not Peter) was a Canaanite and Zealot. Neither of these designations is a profession, strictly speaking, but it is of interest to note some points about the latter. Zealots were the “super patriots” of their day, the “religious nationalists.” Their “stock and trade” was politics and anarchy, the stuff of political revolution. They held a burning desire to overthrow the Roman government. Such would have been the “hero status” available for such as Simon. When he joined with Jesus, he remained zealous, but his allegiance changed. He became devoted to the Messiah rather than the cause of political revolution.

Judas Iscariot, the man “hired” by Jesus to be the treasurer for his group, was a “thief!” Although we are told nothing about what he was before, his character regarding his propensity for thievery and embezzlement is made clear in the text (see **John 12:4–6**). Yet, he, like those we have mentioned, was appointed by Christ to be one of his apostles! All of the gospel accounts identify Judas as the one who betrayed Jesus to the authorities. Matthew’s account notes that Judas suffered remorse for his actions and hanged himself after his attempt to return the “blood money” to the high priest was rejected. His ironic legacy was that the thirty pieces of silver were used to buy a burial place for the poor.

As for the rest of the apostles, the Bible provides no information regarding their professions.

Saul of Tarsus became an apostle after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This man was a Pharisee. He may have, therefore, taught religion or held some political office among the Jews. We know from the scripture that he was a skilled tradesman, a “tent maker,” and that he employed this skill when it was necessary or important to do so (see **Acts 18:1–3**).

While it is interesting, perhaps even helpful, to contemplate the occupations and skills of these men, it might be even more significant to consider their personalities. We are given very little in this regard, but supposition can be made based on what is indicated, slight as it may be.

- Andrew – open-minded
- Bartholomew – composed
- James – fanatical
- Peter – impulsive
- Simon the Zealot – strong-willed
- James, the son of Alphaeus – quiet
- John – passionate
- Judas Iscariot – traitor
- Philip – inquisitive
- Thomas – pessimistic

As subjective and speculative as the summations of these men may be, they are still instructive. Remember also that Jesus spent a whole night in prayer with his Father prior to selecting his 12 apostles (even Judas Iscariot) because of who and what they were (see **Luke 6:12–16**).

What skills do you bring to the Kingdom of Christ? What strengths? What weaknesses? What handicaps? What struggles? What “burdens?”

I have formed the title for this article from the text of **Galatians 6:2**, “*Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” A “burden” is a heavy load. In this text, the word represents particular difficulties or problems people have trouble dealing with. To “bear” connotes carrying something with endurance. “The law of Christ” is the law of love which fulfills the entire law of God.

All of us are “odd” and/or present our various challenges to others. But by “bearing each other’s burdens,” we can allow Christ to shine in his kingdom when we “fulfill” his law. Take a lesson from the apostle Paul by taking a look at yourself in light of **Galatians 6:2**. Include, as well, the context of the reference, namely **verses 1–10**.