

The Twelve Disciples

We know very little about the men whom Jesus chose to be his disciples, but I have made notes about some of the facts that we do have from a bible handbook, and have added some reasonable assumptions. It is worth noting for yourself how different these men were ~ from Simon, the Zealot, who was an extreme Zionist, to Matthew the tax collector, who collaborated with the Romans.

You could either make the little finger puppets (taken from an ancient Scripture Union publication but still wonderful) or use my outline on the back as a guide, to vary according to the disciple and his role, enlarge to A3 and then collage the different figures.

In order for the children to be able to distinguish the different characters, we gave them different clothes, hair or props like a lamb and crook for Thaddeus, who might well have been a shepherd.

Simon Peter was singled out by Jesus as “the Rock (from the Greek petros meaning rock) upon whom I shall build my church”. His wildly impetuous nature and immense bravery show him to be singularly human.

Andrew was Peter's brother and introduced him to Jesus (John's gospel account). Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist.

James was the brother of John. Their father was called Zebedee, but they were popularly known by the nickname “Boanerges” which means “Sons of Thunder” because of their fiery nature.

John was the brother of James and the writer of John's Gospel. They came from a prosperous family that owned a fishing business.

Thaddeus we characterised as a shepherd, and as such would have been a real tough guy.

Judas Iscariot was placed in charge of the money, and grew to love it. Ultimately he sold Jesus to the Pharisees and committed suicide.

Bartholomew

James, son of Alphaeus

Simon the Zealot was a member of an extreme political party that wanted to drive out the Romans from the land (mind you, that aspiration was a common

one in a land where Roman occupation had been going on for about a century).

Philip, who came from Bethsaida

Thomas (called the twin) is perhaps best and most unreasonably remembered for his assertion after the crucifixion that he would not believe in Jesus' resurrection until he had seen him and touched him. According to John's gospel, Jesus enabled Thomas to do just that.

Matthew was a tax collector on behalf of the Roman army of occupation, and as such was almost universally hated. The Jews hated the tax collectors for collaborating, they were even more unpopular because they were so often keeping back money for themselves (see the story of Zaccheus) and of course the Romans despised them too.