

LESSON 3

ANDREW

THE APOSTLE OF SMALL THINGS

As He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

MARK 1:16

It can be hard to live in the shadow of a brother or sister who excels at something. Perhaps you had a brother growing up who received a lot of attention for how good he was at academics. Or maybe you had a sister who always made the varsity team and stood out in athletics. Or maybe your older brother or sister was just more popular than you were at school.

The disciple Andrew—at least in the Gospel accounts—appears to have lived in the shadow of Peter, his better-known brother. Even though he was likely the first disciple to be called (see John 1:35–40) and was included in the lead group (see Mark 1:16–20; Matthew 4:18–22), he did not take part in several of the important events where Peter, James, and John were with Jesus (see Matthew 17:1;

Mark 5:37; 14:33). In fact, many of the verses that name Andrew add that he was Peter's brother, as if that is what made him significant!

We would expect in a situation like this for there to be resentment, sibling rivalry, and even estrangement in the relationship. However, in Andrew's case, we find no evidence in the Gospels that this ever occurred. Andrew and Peter appear to have been lifelong companions with James and John, the other set of fishermen brothers in Capernaum who would become Jesus' disciples. Andrew would have known about Peter's tendency to domineer, yet there is no sign of hesitation on his part when he introduced Peter to Jesus.

As a group, Peter, Andrew, James, and John exercised a sort of collective leadership over the other disciples. Yet of the four in the inner circle, Andrew was the least conspicuous. Apart from the places where all twelve disciples are listed, Andrew's name appears only nine times . . . and most of those references mention him in passing. Nonetheless, almost everything we read in the Bible where Andrew is mentioned reveals that he had the right heart for ministry. He did not seek to be the center of attention. He did not resent those who labored in the limelight. He was evidently pleased to do what he could with the gifts and calling God had bestowed on him. He was an effective leader who never took the spotlight.

In fact, Andrew might just be a *better* model for most church leaders today. Few of us will get the attention in ministry that Peter received. Most of us will minister in relative obscurity just like Andrew. This is why his story can be such an encouragement to us.

STARTING OUT

Think of a time when you lived in someone else's shadow. How positive or negative was that experience for you? How did you generally feel toward the person who got the attention?

EXPLORING THE STORY

Even though Andrew seemed content to play more of an unsung role among Jesus' disciples—and even though he is not mentioned as frequently as Peter, James, and John—we learn a lot about his character when he *is* mentioned in the Bible. In particular, what we find is that Andrew saw the value of *individual people*, of *insignificant gifts*, and of *inconspicuous service*. In this section, you will explore why these same values are important for Jesus' disciples today.

Value of Individual People

Both Andrew and his brother Peter desired for people to come to faith in Christ. We see this is true of Peter when he preached a sermon on the Day of Pentecost and about three thousand people joined the church (see Acts 2:14–41). There is no similar story of Andrew preaching a sermon like this that stirred the masses. However, what we do find Andrew doing is bringing *individual people* to Jesus. Andrew appreciated the value of a single soul.

Remember, the first time we encounter Andrew, he was a follower of John the Baptist. However, when Andrew saw his teacher look at Jesus and say, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29), he started following Jesus. Andrew and another unnamed disciple went to where Jesus was staying and remained with Him that day. Immediately after, Andrew found Peter and introduced him to Jesus (see verses 37–42).

FOLLOWING AFTER JESUS

“The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (John 1:37). The “following” here does not necessarily mean that these two men became permanent disciples at this time. The implication may be that they went after Jesus to examine Him more closely because of John’s testimony. This event constituted a preliminary exposure of John the Baptist’s disciples to Jesus. They eventually dedicated their lives to Him as true disciples when Jesus called them to permanent service after these events (see Matthew 4:18–22; 9:9; Mark 1:16–20).¹

This incident set the tone for Andrew's style of ministry. A few chapters later in John, we read of Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand. In the accounts of this story told in the other Gospels, the disciples were distressed in not knowing where they would get food for the crowd. When Jesus told the disciples to give them something to eat, they all complained that such a feat was impossible, for all they had were five loaves of bread and two fish (see Matthew 14:13-17; Mark 6:30-38; Luke 9:10-14). However, John adds the detail it was *Andrew* who brought the boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus (see John 6:4-9). Andrew alone saw the value in bringing this one individual—a boy—to his Master.

One other story told in John illustrates this character trait of Andrew. After Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, "certain Greeks" who were in the city to celebrate Passover asked to see Jesus (John 12:20). These were probably Gentiles who knew of Jesus' reputation and wanted to meet Him. They first went to Philip, who told Andrew about them (see verses 21-22). Why didn't Philip just directly ask Jesus? We don't know the reason. What we *do* know is that Philip understood Andrew could introduce such individuals to Jesus. Andrew understood that Jesus wanted to meet anyone who wanted to meet Him (see 6:37).

Andrew's example is important for us because most people do not come to Christ as an immediate response to a sermon they heard but because of a person who influenced them. Far too many Christians today believe they are not equipped for evangelism because they can't speak in front of groups or don't have leadership gifts. However, the truth is that all of us, like Andrew, can befriend just one person and influence him or her to follow Jesus.

- Read John 1:40-42. What does Andrew's unhesitating desire to bring his more domineering brother to Jesus say about his perspective and priorities?

- Read Luke 15:4–7. Andrew appreciated the value of a single soul. What stands out in this parable about the value Jesus ascribes to one lost individual?

- Read John 4:39–42. Jesus went out of his way to meet one individual person—a Samaritan woman—at a well. What was the outcome of this meeting?

- What do you learn about evangelism through Andrew's example? What is one thing that God has specifically done through the influence of another person in your life?

Value of Insignificant Gifts

When Jesus was in Jerusalem the week before His death, He went to the place where offerings were made at the temple. Sitting there, He watched wealthy people cast large amounts of money into the treasury box. But what caught His attention was a poor widow who put in just two small copper coins. Calling His disciples, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had" (Mark 12:43–44).

THE WIDOW'S MITES

“He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites” (Luke 21:2). Thirteen chests with funnel-shaped openings stood in the court of the women in the temple. Each was labeled for a specific use, and donations were given accordingly. The Greek expression for “poor widow” signifies the woman was living in extreme poverty. She was desperately poor and more fit to be a recipient of charity than a donor. The *mite* was the smallest copper coin in use in Palestine, worth about one-eighth of a cent, but representing all on which this woman had to live.²

Andrew could accept the truth of this statement because he appreciated the value of seemingly insignificant gifts. Consider the story of the feeding of the five thousand that we just examined. In each of the Gospels, Jesus withdrew from the crowds to be alone with His disciples, but the clamoring multitudes tracked Him down. As the day grew late and it was nearing time to eat, Jesus decided to teach His disciples a lesson about God’s provision. So He said, “Where shall we buy bread, that these [people] may eat?” (John 6:5).

Philip responded, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little” (verse 7).³ Philip was the one who spoke up, but it is evident *all* the disciples were stymied as to how they could feed such a crowd. Again, Andrew was the only disciple who came up with any kind of solution. Certainly, he knew the boy’s five barley loaves and two small fish could not feed five thousand people. But, in his typical fashion, he saw the merit in bringing the boy and his lunch to Jesus.

Jesus had commanded the disciples to feed the people. Andrew somehow understood that He would not issue such a command without making it possible for them to obey. We immediately see the result of Andrew’s simple act of faith. “Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted” (verse 11). When the disciples gathered up the leftovers, what didn’t get eaten of the five barley loaves “filled twelve baskets” (verse 13).

It is amazing that something so little could be used to accomplish something so great. No gift is ever insignificant when it is in Jesus' hands. Andrew seemed instinctively to know this. He knew that he was not wasting Jesus' time by bringing such a paltry gift. He recognized it is not the greatness of the gift that counts but the greatness of the God to whom it is given.

- Read Luke 21:1-4. Where do people tend to go wrong in their measure of a gift's significance? How would you summarize Jesus' perspective of the woman's gift?

- Read John 6:5-9. What did Andrew recognize about the gift of the loaves and fish that he brought to Jesus? Why do you think he decided to bring them to Jesus regardless?

- Read 1 Timothy 4:12-14. What is Paul's advice to Timothy about using his gifts? Why might Timothy have been hesitant to use them in the church?

- What are some of the gifts you believe God has given to you? What is your attitude toward those gifts—and how are you using them for His kingdom?

Value of Inconspicuous Service

Jesus said to His followers, “If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:34–35).

Some people won’t play in the band unless they can hit the bass drum. They want their actions to be seen and heard by all. Peter had this tendency, as did James and John. Andrew, however, was one of those rare individuals who did not mind playing a supporting role as long as the work was being done. He labored quietly in humble places, “not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bond-servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Ephesians 6:6–7).

The Bible does not reveal what happened to Andrew after the Day of Pentecost. Luke states that he waited in Jerusalem with the other disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:13), but after that there is no further mention of him. Whatever role Andrew played in the early church, as far as the book of Acts is concerned, happened behind the scenes. However, we do have early church traditions (history not in the Bible but passed down through the church community) that suggest Andrew took the gospel north.

Eusebius, a church historian who lived in the fourth century, wrote that Andrew preached in Scythia along the northern coast of the Black Sea.⁴ He is believed to have been crucified in the city of Patras in Achaea, near Athens. One account says that he led the wife of a provincial Roman governor to Christ, which infuriated her husband. When she refused to recant, the governor had Andrew crucified (tradition states on an X-shaped cross).

ANDREW'S LEGACY

As far as we know, the disciple Andrew never preached to multitudes or founded any churches. He never wrote an epistle. He isn't mentioned in the book of Acts or any of the epistles. Andrew is more a silhouette than a portrait on the pages of Scripture. After a lifetime of ministry in the shadow of his more famous brother and in the service of His Lord, he then met a similar fate as theirs, remaining faithful and still endeavoring to bring people to Christ right to the end. Was he slighted? No. He was privileged. He was the first to hear that Jesus was the Lamb of God. He was the first to follow Christ. He was part of the inner circle, given intimate access to Christ. Best of all, he had a whole lifetime of privilege, doing exactly what he loved best: introducing individuals to the Lord.⁵

By most accounts, Andrew hung there for two days, exhorting passersby to turn to Jesus for salvation. If these stories are true, it means that after a lifetime of ministry in the shadow of his more famous brother and in the service of His Lord, he met a similar fate as theirs, remaining faithful and still endeavoring to bring people to Christ up until the end.

Andrew's example shows us the value of inconspicuous service. While his acts for God's kingdom might not have received the same attention as other disciples, they were not overlooked by Him. In fact, the Bible says his name will be inscribed, along with the names of the other disciples, on the foundations of the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 21:14).

- Read Proverbs 22:1; Matthew 23:11-12; and Mark 9:35. What do these passages from Scripture say about seeking prominence? Why are these cautions so important for Christians today?

- Read Matthew 5:14-16. What does it mean to be “the light of the world” for Christ? What is ultimately the purpose of being a light and letting others see our good works?

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:3b-7. Based on Paul’s words and Andrew’s example, how would you describe the spirit toward servanthood that a disciple of Christ should have?

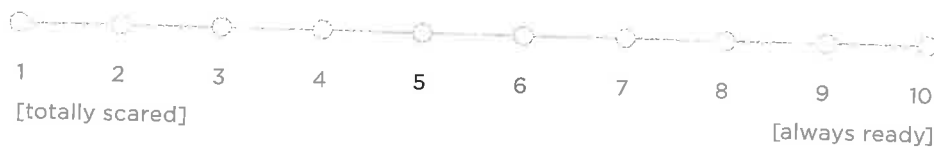
- How would you describe your attitude when it comes to serving quietly for God? How have you seen God reward your acts of inconspicuous service?

CONSIDERING YOUR STORY

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-2. Even though Andrew could be considered “the apostle of small things,” he did big things for God when it came to bringing people to Jesus. He was obviously poised and comfortable introducing people to Christ, because he did it often and he knew Jesus well.

ANDREW: THE APOSTLE OF SMALL THINGS

- Use the following scale to indicate your comfort level in bringing others to Jesus.



- How were you introduced to Jesus? How has that experience influenced your approach to bringing others to Him?

- Just like Andrew, being willing to bring people to Christ, sharing His priorities, and having a close relationship with Him will increase your confidence when it comes to engaging in spiritual conversations. What are some ways you can grow in each of these areas?

Being more willing to bring people to Jesus:

Sharing Jesus' priorities for the lost:

Developing a closer relationship with Jesus:


APPLYING TO YOUR LIFE

In ministry, it's often the little things that count—the individual people, the insignificant gifts, and the inconspicuous service. God delights to use such things because He is the great Multiplier. What seemingly inconsequential pursuit do you want to entrust to Him today?



CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, I sometimes don't have the right attitude when it comes to serving others. I pass up what seem to be lesser opportunities because they aren't as high-profile as what other Christians are doing. Or I look down on opportunities because they're not as significant as what I think I could be doing. I need more of Andrew's mindset, where I'm willing to serve rather than having my ego served. Thank You for Your patience as I learn to value what You value. Amen.



Notes

1. John MacArthur, author and general editor, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), note on John 1:37.
2. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, note on Luke 21:1-2.
3. A denarius was often equal to a day's wage for a laborer (see Matthew 20:2).
4. Eusebius (c. 260-339 AD), *Church History* 3.1.
5. John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 74.