

Character Study: Philip

The Testing of Faith

Various Bible Passages

What's happening?

- Philip was from Bethsaida, but we do not have much information about his family or occupation. We are told that Jesus sought him out with the request, "Follow me." Philip is recorded as sharing his confidence that Jesus was in fact the One spoken of by the prophets (*John 1:43-45*). Of the first five Apostles, Philip was the only one described as being sought out by Jesus. The others went (or were directed) to Him themselves.
- Philip was a faithful follower of the Lord, but often displayed a weak faith. When tested by the Lord on how to feed the five thousand, Philip used common sense over faith and concluded it would be impossible to feed such a large crowd. Jesus showed that His power to multiply food was more than sufficient (*John 6:5-7*). He also hesitated to take some Greek people to Jesus, unsure if the Lord would welcome their visit (*John 12:20-22*).
- At the Last Supper, Jesus told the Apostles that He would be leaving to go to the Father and would one day take them to Him as well (*John 14:4-11*). By revealing the Father to them (seen through His identical divine nature), the Apostles could be confident of this, yet Philip asked for more assurance (v. 8). Jesus was grieved by his lack of faith and pointed to His words and works as more than sufficient evidence (vv. 9-11).
- History shows that Philip went on to make a great impact in the early church, as many came to Christ through his preaching. He also became a martyr for Christ, being stoned in the city of Heliopolis (in Asia Minor).

What's God doing?

> The few events involving Philip are found only in John's Gospel. But from these we can see that Philip accepted Christ's call to follow Him without hesitation, yet struggled in moments of testing. God had to teach Philip that He could be trusted even in moments of uncertainty.

What's to learn?

→ Philip was a thinker and analyzer, who liked to come to conclusions based on factual evidence. This can be a great thing when it comes to the foundation for our faith (*II Pet. 1:16*). But there are moments in life when we face difficult circumstances or questions of which intellectual reasoning does not provide all the answers. In such cases, instead of allowing doubt or fear to creep in, we must focus our trust in God for who He is and what He has done!