



Links Players

PHILIP—JESUS HAD A PLAN

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 1:43 NIV)

The Country Club at Brookline presented countless strategic challenges to those contending for the US Open title last month. Should they try to drive the green on the 310-yard, par-four fifth hole, knowing that they could easily end up with a bogey or worse if they miss and arrive in the messy rough?

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Jesus had a plan for Philip even though Philip lacked spiritual insight. He was the first Jesus directly called to be an apostle.

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In numerous post-round interviews, the players talked about sticking to their game plan, which they had plotted out in the weeks leading up to the championship. They had a plan, and they stuck to it.

Jesus had a plan for Philip even though Philip lacked spiritual insight. He was the first Jesus directly called to be an apostle. What little we know about Philip we learn from John’s gospel.

In the stories about feeding the five thousand, the Greeks’ request to see Jesus, and the Last Supper, Philip’s lack of spiritual insight is displayed. In *The Apostles of Our Lord*, J. G. Greenhough writes that Philip’s “mind was precise, methodical, and almost mechanical—the mind of a plodding, accurate, conscientious business man—with no originality. He had little moral imagination and was slow to understand and slow to believe what he could not see.”

Philip had been with Jesus since the start of his ministry. He had seen him turn water into wine, heal the sick and the lame, and had listened to his teachings for almost three years. Yet, when asked by Jesus for suggestions on how they might feed the crowd of five thousand, Phillip did not have sufficient faith to suggest Jesus perform another one of his miracles. He could only say, “We don’t have enough money to buy food for all of these folks.”

Later, when Jesus tells the apostles, “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well,” (John 14:7) Philip asks Jesus to “show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Not surprisingly, Jesus graciously rebukes Philip by saying, “Even after I have been among you for a long time, you should realize that if anyone has seen me, they have seen the Father.”

If the story ended here, it would be a stretch to say that Jesus’ plan in calling Philip to be an apostle was successful. But there is more!

Acts 2:1-4 describes the apostles, including Philip, being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. While we do not learn from the Bible what happened to Philip next, history and tradition report that he was deeply involved in missionary work and expansion of the early church. During the next 25 years, he traveled throughout Turkey, Russia, and France preaching the gospel and establishing local churches. He was one of the first apostles who was martyred for his faith.

There is a lot of Philip in me. I am a “facts and figures” kind of person. I think of myself as practical and capable of making sound decisions, but when it comes to the spiritual realm, I can be easily paralyzed in my thinking and decision-making.

If you are like me in this regard, we are fortunate enough to see and understand Philip’s experience and transformation. We know that we are still a “work in progress.” We know that God has a plan for us, and that plan is still evolving. We know that Jesus will show great patience and love—like he did with Philip—as he nurtures and develops us according to his plan. This knowledge serves to strengthen our confidence to stick to the path he has set us on.

PRAYER - Heavenly Father, thank you for having a plan for me, for your patience and nurturing of me along the way, and for keeping the plan even when I struggle and make a mess of things.

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