



Bible Heroes

Story Notes:

Incomplete: A New Apostle

Acts 1:12-26

Essential Teachers notes:

Numbers are of such huge significance to the scriptures that it's not surprising the apostles felt unsettled by being 11 and not 12. Clearly they decided to do something about it, though later passages will show their number would soon be persecuted and replacements no longer were an option to choose. It is noted that although Matthias is chosen Justus went on to become a prominent bishop and so his story does not end with not being chosen.

Tell this story or a similar one of your choice from a favourite bible translation or story book. This version is supplied for inspiration, feel free to omit or embellish to give it your personal voice.

Other passages - none specific.

Why did Jesus choose twelve apostles? Do you know?

I wonder if you have a favourite number? In many cultures around the world, seven is considered a lucky number; some people think thirteen is unlucky. The Bible has lots of numbers that appear many times.

The number three is often used to mean complete. Many things are in sets of three. I wonder if you can think of an example? Numbers became special to the people who studied scripture. The numbers three, seven, twelve and forty appear in stories again and again.

So when Jesus chose apostles, it wasn't surprising that he chose twelve. That number had often been used to represent *everyone*. There were twelve tribes of Israel, and so twelve was often used to represent a fair government. Even today, you often have twelve people on a jury in court. The problem was that there weren't twelve apostles anymore. Judas had betrayed Jesus, and now there were only eleven. The twelve were incomplete.

We often think of Jesus travelling with just twelve men, but that's only part of the picture. Jesus travelled with a whole crowd of people. Men and women who didn't get chosen to be apostles, all people who had met Jesus and whose lives had changed forever. Around 120 people were in the crowd after Jesus left the disciples and went up to Heaven to be with his father.

Peter stood up and talked to everyone. They had all heard what had happened to Judas, how he had died. Peter asked if there was anyone there who had been with the group since John baptised Jesus, anyone who had travelled all the places Jesus had travelled, heard all the teaching he had shared, and seen Jesus after he came back from the dead. Peter asked if someone could complete the number by being the new twelfth apostle.

Slowly the people started to whisper; "When did you join the crowd?" "How about you?" "I think I missed that bit!" Eventually they found just two men: Justus and Matthias. The disciples prayed; then they decided they would cast lots.

Casting lots could mean a lot of things. Sometimes it meant rolling a dice or flipping a coin or drawing sticks to see who gets the shortest. It may seem like a strange way to decide something, but they believed God would make sure of the right outcome.

The lot fell to Matthias; he was named the new apostle. The twelve were complete again and ready for the next stage of their great Jesus adventure.

Today's bible hero is Matthias because he shows us the gift of COMPLETION