

## **PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE**

### **John 1:29-42**

Perhaps in the past you have applied for a job and attended an interview panel or selection board. Well, picture the disciples before Jesus appointed them as His closest associates.

Peter stood there smelling of fish - uncouth, uncultured, impetuous, and impulsive. Andrew, plus Zebedee's sons James and John, also reeked of fish and lacked refinement. Philip appeared to be indecisive. Thomas seemed cynical. Matthew was considered a traitor. Simon the Zealot was a dangerous patriot. Judas was a thief.

The New Testament tells it like it was. This was a group not-likely-to-succeed, and by human standards, not-likely-to-be-chosen by a selection board, but they *were* chosen by Jesus, who knows us as we are.

In John 1, some of them are introduced to us, so let us consider the apostle Andrew. In the entire New Testament, Andrew is mentioned only twelve times, and six of those re-iterate that he was the brother of Simon Peter. It was almost as if the writers were afraid that we would not know who he was and it seemed that his own name didn't carry enough weight.

It's almost as if he played second fiddle to Peter. Yet, Andrew was the first of the apostles to have his name linked with that of Jesus. Andrew was not as well known as his more gifted and famous brother, Peter, but from him, we learn that there is honour in taking second place.

Andrew was not a brilliant theologian or an eloquent orator. If he ever wrote even a line or preached a single sermon, we are not told about it. He was just a fisherman, an ordinary person. Yet Jesus chose to make Andrew one of His apostles.

If we could look into the Lord's storehouse of valuables, we would probably be surprised at the seemingly insignificant things we would see.

In it we would find two small copper coins, once belonging to a poor widow. They were all that she had, but she gave them away willingly.

We would also find five barley loaves and two fish, the lunch box of a family which a peasant boy donated to Andrew and which was used to feed 5000.

There would also be a broken alabaster jar which once belonged to Mary of Bethany. In an act of impetuous devotion, she broke it open and poured its contents on the head of Jesus.

We too would find a cup of water and underneath the caption, 'Even a cup of cold water given in my name will not lose its reward.'

Jesus had an affinity with ordinary people and ordinary things. When we study what little we know about Andrew, we discover that the ordinary things he did, led to the achievement of extraordinary outcomes.

You could make a case that Andrew's position was the most difficult among the apostles. Right from the start he had a close association with Peter, James and John. These two sets of brothers were the first four followers of Jesus.

It was from these four that Jesus chose three as His inner circle of apostles. For some reason, Andrew was left out.

One day Jesus went into the home of a little girl who had died and He brought her back to life. To witness this event, He took with Him Peter, James and John...Andrew was left out.

On another occasion Jesus went up the mountain of Transfiguration and talked with Moses and Elijah. Again, He took with Him Peter, James and John...Andrew was left out.

On the night of His greatest agony, when Jesus went deep into the garden to pray, He took with Him Peter, James and John...and again, Andrew was left out.

Why Andrew was left out, we do not know, but here we witness the extraordinary spirit that Andrew possessed.

If he ever suffered one pang of envy, there is no indication of it in the gospel records. There was simply no room for petty jealousy in him. He was able to appreciate that Jesus had the freedom to choose just as He pleased, and Andrew had the confidence that Jesus knew best.

Each disciple was chosen for a particular purpose according to his talents, and Andrew had the courage to be himself and do his own work in his own way.

Three times in the New Testament we see Andrew in action, and he is either introducing people to Jesus or helping out in a situation. This tells us he must have been a very likeable person.

The first time he is mentioned, he is bringing his brother Simon Peter and introducing him to Jesus. The second time he persuades a boy to give to Jesus the food he is carrying. Little did they both realise that with it, Jesus would feed a multitude. And the third time we find him reaching across racial boundaries to befriend a group of Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. This was Andrew - always doing the simple task with quiet efficiency, happy to take second place and not seeking the limelight.

In every walk of life, we need leaders who can inspire and motivate. But we also need the back-room person, without whom the leaders would not be able to operate. Andrew was most definitely a back-room boy. Jesus needed his skills just as much as He needed the skills of his brother Peter. And we thank Andrew for teaching us that there is dignity in taking second place.

I have not had many jobs in my life, but each of them taught me something. Whenever I advanced through a company, having increasing responsibilities, there was a great deal to learn. It was a steep learning curve in those seemingly, 'far off' days, but I remember many of the things I learned along the way:

Always be polite and respectful to the people you are training to lead.

Always work harder than those you manage. *If you are slacking off, you lose respect.*

One of my past bosses said to me, "If you are going to manage people, you have to be aware. You have to develop a 'managerial eye,' so that you know what is going on in the workplace.

My father taught me, 'never be late.' I can still remember him saying, in a very authoritative voice, "No son of mine is going to be late for work. Leave the car that won't start & get on the bus."

I learned the importance of up-grading your education at every opportunity. There is no course you can take that will not make you a better manager.

Throughout my business career, my mantra has always been to give the same respect to everyone, from the CEO to the person who sweeps the floor.

In those formative years, as my career advanced, my most memorable jobs have always been *assistant* manager, *assistant* to the general manager, *vice-president*.

Do you see a theme here? Do you notice that all the jobs I've had, the memories I now have, have all been as the number two in any organization, an employee who had lived and learned as he progressed through the ranks, who could be trusted to help his manager, to make him/her look good to their immediate supervisor?

I have never coveted the 'top job,' with all its political nuances. I don't do 'political' very well and I don't think Andrew did either. He was full of knowledge that he learned along the way. His job seems to be the 'vice-president' of the touring group; one who could always be relied upon to allow those in authority over him, to be able to do their jobs.

No, Jesus didn't single him out as one of the 'inner circle,' but his job was nonetheless important to Jesus. He looked after the worldly stuff for Him. Yet, even though he never seemed to be included in Jesus' special occasions, he was the one who always helped them succeed, by looking after the logistics of the life of a group of travelling evangelists.

Who knows what aid he was to this new movement? He understood that it was Peter, James had John that Jesus was grooming to spread the faith after He had gone. Andrew, on the other hand, knew his job, and without him, life would have been so much more difficult for all of them.

Do you know where the term 'second fiddle' comes from? In an orchestra, the **first** violins(fiddles) carry the tune. They are in the front row and get the attention. The **second** violins sit behind them and play notes that harmonize with the tune. They are a vital part of the music, but go virtually unnoticed.

The Bible teaches that we are all equal in the sight of God, so "hats off" to all the second fiddles, and special kudos to Andrew who was an integral part of Jesus' three-year ministry!