

I am a very literal person. Many times, I miss things because I am very literal. It has been said that literal people will see the trees, but miss the forest. Or, at least I am that way. I am very detailed, very analytical, and very literal. I don't always do so well with certain types of literature, and this is because I am overly focused on certain words at the expense of the whole sentence. Metaphors, analogy, and poetic language can be difficult for me. Similarly, I tend to doubt and ask questions. I ask questions and can struggle with doubt and I think this goes a long way with how literal I am, how analytical I am and how detail oriented I am.

This is what I loved watching Mercedes when she was a baby. Many of you have been parents. Many of you have been grandparents, and many of you are grandparents. Mercedes is quite analytical as well. When she was a baby she loved details. Or, at least she appeared to. I am thinking that most babies do. I remember watching her as she walked around. As she walked she studies things. She studied every little detail of things. I often wonder what it would be like to be a baby. I must think this because I can't remember being a baby. I noticed that she would go from one place in the house to another and another. She really loved it if she was at the church because there was more to explore. She would explore every little detail of this building and with every room there is more detail to explore. I usually would arrive to the church early in order to go over my sermon. At one point Meagan and Mercedes came with me. Mercedes was in the sanctuary listening and taking notes and Meagan went in the other room for a moment. Would you believe that Mercedes started heading for the door at the back of the sanctuary (I think she was bored with the sermon). But she did. Now, that was 9 years ago and Mercedes is now about to turn 10 years old. Yes, she is very detailed and very literal.

Mercedes and I have something in common with Philip, the disciple of Jesus. And it isn't that we all know a little Greek. Just kidding, only two of us know some Greek (Philip and me). Philip the disciple was an analytical person, he was very detail oriented, he was very literal, and he was also an evangelist. He was the first to share his faith. He was chosen of God as a disciple. Let's take a look at the passages dealing with Philip.

- I. Philip was an evangelist. Let's look at his calling and his eagerness to share his faith. Let's briefly look at John 1:43-45: *43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote —Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*
 - a. A number of weeks ago we looked at this passage and I told you that Philip was so excited about meeting Jesus that he couldn't help but share that with Nathaniel. Meeting Jesus was a happy thought for Philip.
 - b. It seems obvious that Nathanael was Philip's friend. One writes this: "I think friendship provides the most fertile soil for evangelism. Don't you? Because there's already a relationship of love. And into that relationship of love, you can introduce the reality of Christ. Invariably, and I say this through years of experience, invariably when somebody

becomes a Christian their first reaction in the warmth and the joy of that new found life is to find a friend and tell that person what has happened.”

- c. Notice also that Philip was a devout Jew just like Nathaniel was. Notice that Philip referenced the law and the prophets. Most likely this detail oriented analytical man poured that detail into his Jewish faith.
- d. Philip was likely the third disciple Jesus called. First was Andrew and then his brother Simon whom Jesus called Peter (John 1:35-43).
- e. A few weeks ago, I asked you if Jesus is exciting to you. When was the last time you shared who Jesus is with someone else? When was the last time you shared that at some point in your life you met Jesus?

Now, let's look at some other characteristics about Philip:

- II. Philip was very detail oriented but missed some obvious things. Let's look at a few verses:
 - a. John 6:5-7: *5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"*
 - b. In this passage Jesus had been traveling and teaching the people and now the people must have been getting hungry. There were 5000 men alone at this location. But this shouldn't be a big deal for Jesus. Now Philip had already seen Jesus turn water into wine. Also, at the beginning of this chapter Jesus had been healing and performing miracles. Yet, Philip didn't put the miracles Jesus had already brought to pass and the food problem together. All he thinks about is the money.
 - c. As I thought about this passage I thought, "Maybe Philip knew that Jesus could supernaturally feed them, but Philip was afraid to ask Him to do this? Maybe Philip was having a senior moment? Maybe Philip was tired?" We just don't know. What we do know is that Philip responds that it would take half a year's wages for everyone to have one bite.
 - d. Maybe some of you are like this. I can be. I can know that God has always taken care of me before and yet I can still worry about details. Like I said, I am a very detailed person, and sometimes I can doubt just as it appears Philip doubted.
 - e. I remember many times as a child and teenager asking my dad for help with something and doubting that he could really help. Yet, most all of the times I asked, he was able to help. Then he would respond, "You doubted me!" And yes, I did.
 - f. In another passage we see where Philip just didn't get it. Look also at John 14:8-9. *8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you*

know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

- g. All this time Jesus had been traveling with these disciples and teaching them. All this time and yet Jesus sounds a little bit frustrated here. In this case it is that Philip didn't yet understand who Jesus really is.
- h. So, Jesus explains this a little bit clearer. You've seen me, you've seen the Father.
- i. Again, I can understand how Philip thinks this way. Many times, us literal people can miss an obvious message. I have done the same thing. Many times, people will tell jokes and I just don't understand them because I am too literal.
- j. On another note, is it possible that Philip was willing to ask the question that others were thinking? Maybe.

III. Another note about Philip is that he was educated and likely knew Greek.

- a. In John 12:20-22 some Greeks came to Philip in order to inquire about Jesus. This quite possibly implies that Philip knew Greek and was educated. But instead of taking them to Jesus, Philip goes to Andrew, listen to what John MacArthur says about this. It is somewhat humorous:
- b. *Well, Philip may have been approachable, he may have been a warm-hearted fellow, but he didn't take them to Jesus. He said, in effect, - Now you guys wait here, I don't know if this is kosher, I don't know if this can happen... I've got to go check. So he goes and tells Andrew. And together they go to Jesus. You know what we learn about Philip? He was not decisive. He was not forceful. Peter would have grabbed those Gentiles and dragged them into the presence of Jesus and said, - Lord, look at these guys, they want to see you. But not Philip... Philip had to check it out... check it out with somebody else. Well, what was bothering him? He was still living in chapter 10 of Matthew, way at the beginning when the Lord had said, "I am come but for the lost sheep of the house of Israel." So he's saying -These are Gentiles... you know, it's not in the minutes to bring the Gentiles. I don't think the constitution allows it... the bylaws, you know. The Lord said He has not come for the lost but for the lost sheep of Israel. He didn't get the message of grace. Yes, He came as the Messiah to Israel but He had also said clear back in chapter 6: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." He's a literalist. Got this little dinky focus.. .there's no precedent for this, it's not in the code.¹*

John MacArthur says the following about Philip:

He is so skeptical, so unconvinced. Here is a man of limited ability, here is a man of inadequate faith, here is a man of imperfect understanding, here is a man who fools around with numbers instead of

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2273/the-masters-men-part-2-philip-and-bartholomew>

meditating. Here is a man who is stuck on the level of rules and codes and stuff instead of seeing God. And someday he's going to reign over the tribes of Israel in the regeneration and is going to inherit gloriously in the Kingdom, beyond what he would ever have dreamed... a pessimistic, reluctant insecure, unsure, analytical, skeptical man. Saw facts and figures and missed the big picture of power and grace. His faith was limited by money, circumstances and proof.²

Jesus chose Philip as a disciple and you know what, if you are a Christian, Jesus chose you too. Many times I pray, "Lord Jesus use me even in my weaknesses." Philip's attention to detail and being a little over analytical was in some ways a weakness, but Jesus chose him and Jesus used him. You may feel that you have some strengths that are also weaknesses, but Jesus will use you as well as long as you follow Jesus.

Once again, tradition tells us that he was martyred for his faith in Christ. He was a disciple until the end.

I am detail oriented; I can miss the obvious just as Philip misses some obvious things. But I know that Philip used that detail, analytical, way in which he was created for Jesus and Jesus chose him as a disciple.

But you know what? The church is made up of details. Looking at the church holistically we are all one big group of people. Every person is a detail that is very important. We all have strengths and weaknesses, and we are all so very important.

THE SILENT SERMON

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him.

It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited.

The pastor made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The pastor glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow, once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

² <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2273/the-masters-men-part-2-philip-and-bartholomew>

As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, 'Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the firey sermon. I will be back in church next Sunday'.

being a Christian and not being a disciple, and not being involved in the church, the Scriptures and prayer is like wearing miss matched shoes or socks

Each and every one of you are an important detail in the church of Jesus Christ.

The question is, do you realize this and are you following Christ?

Prayer: