

Discipleship

An Overview of Discipleship

Lesson #1 for January 5, 2008

Scriptures: Matthew 4:18-22; 10:24,25; Mark 3:13,14; 8:34,35; Luke 14:25,26.

1. What is a “disciple”? Who qualifies to be a “disciple”? What do we have to do to qualify? What kind of people is God looking for to be disciples? Why did Jesus call the group of twelve disciples as well as others who later joined them?
2. For about 30 years, Jesus lived the ordinary life of a common carpenter in the city of Nazareth. He interacted with the people of Nazareth, as well as the Samaritans who lived nearby, and the Romans who were building the city of Sepphoris about 2 miles away. Apparently, He learned His trade from His “father” and was a faithful Son to His mother. All this time, He was apparently doing the will of His Father—God. Then, one day, apparently God said, “Go!” and He prepared to begin His ministry. He traveled to the Jordan and south to where John was baptizing. After being baptized, He went into the wilderness where He meditated and was without food for 40 days. When He returned to where John was baptizing, John announced Him as “the Lamb of God.”
3. Some of John’s followers, or disciples, were very much interested in this new young Teacher, and they asked to follow Him. Based on what we are told by Ellen G. White, some of those disciples spent periods of time with Jesus over the next two years. During that time, Jesus worked primarily in the territory of Judea. He kept a very low profile, and we know almost nothing about His activities. When John the Baptist was arrested by Herod and put in prison, Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee to begin the major portion of His ministry there. He was already a “wanted man” in Judea, primarily because of His “Sabbath activities.” With only 1 ½ years of His ministry left, He was instructed by God to “call” some disciples. The time had come for Him to begin assembling a team that would become the core of the future “church.”
4. Read Matthew 4:18-22. How well do you think Peter, Andrew, James, and John knew Jesus by that time? Jesus’ early life had been spent as a carpenter in Nazareth, some distance from the Sea of Galilee. About the time described in Matthew 4:18-22, He moved His place of residence to Capernaum, probably to the home of Peter. Most of the disciples were called from the area around Capernaum. Most of them had been fishermen.
5. Is there something special about being fishermen? Why were most of Jesus’ disciples former fishermen? Consider some of the characteristics of fishermen:
 - 1) Fishermen need patience. They must understand fish. And when it is necessary, they must wait.
 - 2) Fishermen must have perseverance. Sometimes, one can fish all night and get nothing. But the fisherman must not give up. He must try again.
 - 3) Fishermen must be brave. There is an old Greek saying, “My boat is so small and the sea is so large.” The Sea of Galilee was known for its terrible squalls. Telling people the truth sometimes upsets them terribly. Disciples must be willing to “take their lives in their hands” as they minister to others.
 - 4) A good fisherman has an eye for the right moment. He can see when the opportunity is right to catch fish. Good disciples will “see” in others the proper moment to speak to them about

Jesus.

5) A good fisherman knows what method is best for each kind of fish. Not every person is attracted in the same way. The wise disciple will know how to reach different people where they are.

6) A good fisherman knows how to keep himself out of sight! Movement scares fish. If they see something move, they tend to shy away. Those who want to attract others to Jesus must allow Jesus to be seen and not themselves.

6. Jesus chose unlearned fishermen because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world's most honored men. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties. It was such men that Jesus called to be His collaborators; and He gave them the advantage of association with Himself. Never had the world's great men such a teacher. When the disciples came forth from the Saviour's training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. {DA 250.1; CC 282.3; 2MCP 805.2}
7. It is clear that the disciples that followed Jesus were “called.” The one exception was Judas. Even Paul/Saul was “called” by God through the special “intervention” on the road to Damascus. So, it should be clear that we do not choose ourselves to be disciples. But if we are made of the right kind of material, God will “call” us.
8. The disciples were clearly “working-class” men. They were probably not really poor but they were certainly not rich. They worked hard for a living. Some of them had temperaments that were described well by the rugged conditions on the Sea of Galilee. One could see when a storm was brewing!
9. There are certain clear requirements for being a “disciple.” If one is called, one must be willing to respond and follow. He must see value in his new pursuit. His response must include active obedience. And finally, it will always involve a clear break from the past.
10. There are two different aspects to discipleship as understood in a Christian context. Christians speak of the original group of twelve as the followers of Jesus, or “the disciples.” But there is another sense to discipleship. Even in our day, we personally can be involved with Christ, the “Master Rabbi,” and that transforming experience will make us “modern-day disciples.” Then, we will correctly represent Him to all around us.
11. All disciples are “on a mission.” Their number one commitment is to the Master. When asked to do something, they respond immediately. Fishermen dropped their nets. (Matthew 4:18-22) Tent makers stopped making tents. (Acts 11:26) And disciples not only are taught, but they learn to teach like their Master taught. So disciples are apprentices, learners, and followers. They answer a call to commitment. They do not stop to ask many questions because they trust—based on experience with Him—the Master. They are prepared for a life of difficulties. Their reward is the intimate relationship they have with the Master.

12. Disciples must recognize that they have been called to a new community of fellowship. They must be willing to declare publicly their commitment. That is not a time for weaklings or shy people.
13. Read Matthew 22:37-40. Their commitment must be to God and to their neighbor.
14. Read Luke 14:25,26. Jesus did not pretend that following Him was going to be easy. It may even cause conflicts within one's own family. The question is: Is the relationship between the Master and His disciple top priority? In our day, how do we practice being disciples of the true Master? Are we primarily committed to the church and its doctrines, to a particular charismatic preacher, or to a "picture" or view of God? Or is there a way to be directly committed to Jesus Himself and have an intimate relationship with Him in our day? (1 Corinthians 1: 10-17)
15. How serious is your commitment to discipleship? Is Jesus top priority in your life? Are you prepared to stand "tall" and absolutely committed to Him through the time of trouble? Would you die rather than misrepresent Him?
16. Seventh-day Adventist Christians have many beliefs. For which of those beliefs would you be willing to die? Would you be willing to die for any one of the 28 doctrines currently agreed upon by the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
17. Later in His ministry, Jesus spoke a great deal about the cross. (Matthew 16:24,25; Mark 8:34,35; and Luke 9:23) At that time, His followers still had no notion that He would be crucified. What did they think when He talked about the cross?
18. Perhaps, the one most important characteristic of a "disciple" is his desire to imitate his Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:1)
19. True disciples will recognize that whatever happens to their Master/Teacher, is likely to happen to them, as well. Jesus led His disciples all the way to Gethsemane. Then they scattered. They were afraid. They were discouraged.
20. But just before reaching Gethsemane, Jesus assured them that the disaster that was about to strike would not separate them from Him unless they were "unfruitful branches." (John 15:1-10) If our relationship with Jesus Christ is one of commitment and dedication, carrying a top priority, then we do not need to worry about being separated from the Vine.
21. What is the difference between church membership and discipleship?
22. If we are true disciples of our Lord, what are we saying to the world about Him? If by beholding we are becoming changed, can the world see Jesus in us? (Matthew 5:16)

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