

Discipleship

Discipleship Then and Now

Lesson #2 for January 12, 2008

Scriptures: Matthew 24:14; 28:19,20; Mark 16:20; John 3:21-30; Acts 5:34-39.

1. This lesson is about discipleship: discipleship in the days of Jesus and discipleship in our day. What does “discipleship” mean to you?
2. What would you do if someone showed up at your place of work in the middle of a busy morning and said, “Drop everything and follow me”? There would be no mention of a health plan, no retirement plan, no discussion about salary, no bank account. Nothing would be mentioned about supporting your family or even how much time you would be able to be at home. Would you even consider such a “call”?
3. Would you need to know something about the person making the call? Would you follow him if he was a very charismatic preacher? Would you follow him if he was able to perform a miracle or two? Would you want to ask some questions first?
4. The earliest mention of disciples following Jesus is found in John 1:35-39. Those two disciples were attracted to Jesus because of the comments by John the Baptist. They wanted to ask questions. A couple days later after walking to Galilee, Jesus saw a young man and suggested to him, “Come. Follow me.” (John 1:43-51) Are disciples supposed to be called or just attracted? Does the disciple make the decision to follow his Lord or does he wait until called by his Lord?
5. Among the ancient Greeks, well-known and talented teachers and philosophers were sought out by students who often paid to “sit at their feet.” By contrast, in Jewish culture disciples were normally called by the teacher or rabbi.
6. So, what would it require to inspire you to leave your job and follow an itinerant preacher?
7. Jesus is no longer walking visibly on this earth. So, how do we know if He has called us? Or do we automatically assume that everyone has been called? Does God call only those who are predestined to be disciples? (Romans 8:29-30) Or does God treat us all equally? (Acts 10:34,35)
8. Jesus had before Him an entire Jewish nation that He could have called—a nation that He had called in earlier times. Why do you think Jesus chose *only* those 11 disciples? (Judas asked to be included) Or did He? What about the “rich, young ruler”? (Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-23; Luke 18:18-30) What is implied by Luke 8:1-3?
9. Each of us has a set of beliefs. We try to fit our beliefs together into a logical whole known as a “paradigm.” Most of us have a very difficult time dealing with data or bits of evidence which do not seem to fit into our paradigm of ideas. (Luke 18:34) Before jumping up and following an itinerant preacher/teacher, what kind of evidence would you want to have?
10. Can you think of a person—a teacher, pastor, or friend—in your past who has had an enormous influence on your life and your beliefs? What was it about that person that influenced you?
11. Almost a year and a half after the start of His ministry when Jesus needed to leave Judea because His life was being threatened, He moved to Galilee and began His formal ministry. Soon after arriving in Galilee, He called a group of disciples. (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16) How many of these disciples were already well acquainted with Jesus? Had some of them been following Him in the previous year and a half—at least at times?
12. What does it mean to be a disciple? Try to imagine joining a group of strangers—both men and women—and essentially living with them night and day for the next two years. You would walk together, eat together, talk together, preach together, perform miracles together, and learn together.
13. What do you think was the relationship between the designated “12 disciples,” the women who assisted them, and the others who followed along later including the 72? (Luke 10:1-12)
14. Did the designated 12 disciples and the others who followed Jesus follow because He asked them

to? Or did they follow Jesus because they were so attracted to Him that they could not imagine doing anything else? Is such a relationship feasible in our day?

15. Under the most ideal circumstances, what kind of relationship would God like to have with those of us who are living at the end of time? Does God want us to be His children? But not all children get along very well with their parents! Is God calling us to be servants, even slaves? Moses and Paul—two of God’s best friends—spoke of themselves in those terms. Is God calling us to be casual friends or “just” followers? Or is God calling us to be *intimate* with Him? What is implied by the kind of friendship to which Jesus invited His disciples? (John 15:15-17)
16. Do you think that the relationship between Jesus and the disciple John during those more than two years they spent together was intimate? Was that real discipleship? Does God want us to be “intimate” with Him? (Genesis 4:1; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 7:22,23)
17. Many of us have a mental picture of heaven that sounds very exciting. We are looking forward to doing all sorts of interesting, educational, even exciting things when we get there. We sing songs suggesting that the best part of all will be getting to be near Jesus and the Father and getting to know them better. Could that kind of experience actually begin here and now? Is it possible for human beings in our day to develop a relationship with God that is the most exciting and rewarding aspect of their lives?
18. Sometimes, discipleship is given a negative connotation. Some would suggest that we give up our own desires and wants and simply do what the Master tells us to do. Is that your understanding of discipleship? The Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide suggests that we should take the attitude of John the Baptist—being humble, allowing Jesus to excel while we slip into the background. But, John the Baptist was never called a disciple of Jesus. Why didn’t John the Baptist follow Jesus?
19. Clearly, Jesus called His disciples to be with Him so they could be apprentices and to learn to do as He did. He gave them power to perform miracles even raising people from the dead and casting out demons. (Luke 10:17)
20. What do you think a disciple of Jesus would be doing today? Preaching? Teaching? Living a Godlike life? Do you think that if God could find eleven disciples like the ones He chose 2000 years ago, He could finish “the work” in our day?
21. Would God be looking for different skills and qualities for disciples in our day?
22. There can be no doubt that the story of Jesus and His personality and charisma were attractive to a wide variety of people. Why do you think the Greeks were attracted to Him? (John 12:20, 21) Was Jesus the most “talked-about” and interesting Person in Jerusalem? (Luke 24:15-18)
23. What keeps us from being disciples in our day? Would we be willing to be disciples if we saw a few miracles? What kind of evidence would it take to convince you to leave everything and follow a modern-day “Jesus”?
24. Would God actually ask us to leave everything behind in our day?
25. Or is our educational system not designed to produce “disciples”? Would it take a lot of preparation?

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