

## ***Discipleship***

# ***Following the Master: Discipleship in Action***

Lesson #9 for March 1, 2008

Scriptures: Matthew 8:14,15; 10:34-37; 28:18-20; Luke 5:17-20.

1. This lesson is about the behavior of “disciples.” If we are true disciples of Jesus, how does that affect our behavior? We will look at examples of various people who were affected in one way or another by being disciples.
2. How important is it for us to learn to practice being disciples? Is discipleship essential for salvation?
3. Jesus lived 2000 years ago in a cultural setting very different from ours. What kind of actions does He expect from “disciples” today?
4. Have you ever wished that you could have been alive and been one of the 12 disciples following Jesus? Which disciple do you think was most like you?
5. Every single disciple ended up losing his life as a result of his discipleship. More than that, they gave what was left of their lives to the cause in one way or another. Even Judas left his prior employment to follow Jesus. Is discipleship today just a sideline for us? Is it something we do for a few hours on Sabbath each week? How much does your discipleship affect your actions all week long?
6. What motivates someone in our day to be a disciple? Do we focus primarily on what we think Jesus will be able to do for us? Or are we prepared to ask what we can do for Him? John F. Kennedy said in his famous inaugural address, “Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.” Should we be asking the same question about our Christianity?
7. Let us look at some examples of people who responded almost immediately to their experience of discipleship. Read Matthew 8:14, 15. Peter was married; his mother-in-law was living with them. She had been quite sick and Jesus miraculously healed her. How did she respond? She immediately jumped up and began to prepare food for Jesus and all of His disciples. Was Peter’s mother-in-law just being naturally hospitable or was she being truly a “disciple”? How could you tell the difference? Do we look for opportunities to serve?
8. Read Luke 5:17-26, the story of the “paralytic.” We do not know exactly what the cause of this young man’s illness was. We do not know exactly how seriously ill he was or how long he had been sick. But he had friends. Those friends determined to take him to Jesus because they were sure that Jesus was his last hope. When his friends could not get close to Jesus, they climbed onto the roof of the home, opened up a hole in the roof, and lowered him down in front of Jesus. How much effort do we put forth to “enter the presence” of Jesus?
9. What did Jesus do for that young man? (Luke 5:20) Jesus offered to forgive the sins of the young man because of the faith of his friends—not because of the faith of the man healed! But why did Jesus even mention his sins? Why didn’t He just heal him of his illness? Recall also that at the cross, Jesus forgave His torturers because He was—and is—so gracious, even though they did not ask for forgiveness just as Jesus was so gracious in this incident of the paralytic man.
10. We need to remember that in Jesus’ day, it was believed that poverty, illness, or any kind of

disaster was the direct result of one's own sin. So, that young man was suffering not only from a serious illness but also from the mistaken beliefs that he was alienated from God and that God would not accept him. As a result, his mental condition was perhaps as serious or more serious than his physical condition! So Jesus simply told him, "Your sins are forgiven, my friend." (Luke 5:20, *GNB*)

11. Notice that while the sick could not find room to enter into that house, the Pharisees and scribes were there! They were keeping the sick people out! And why were they there? They were looking for an opportunity to catch Jesus and to accuse Him! Those authorities had the opportunity of associating with Jesus—the most wonderful Person who has ever lived on this earth. Instead, all they could do was look for opportunities to accuse Him! According to their way of thinking, Jesus was a threat to everything they stood for! There was no room for Jesus in their paradigm. While Jesus was doing everything He could to heal and save, they were doing everything they could to accuse and destroy.
12. Read Matthew 10:34-37; Luke 12:49-53. We are all familiar with the ideas suggested by Jesus that we should love even our enemies. (Matthew 5:43,44) Christianity is known as a religion of peace. Why did Jesus suggest that Christianity will cause so much strife in certain situations? It may even separate families. What kind of opposition have you experienced from being a Christian?
13. If an associate or fellow worker makes some comment about your religion or your Christianity, do you, in effect, try to deny it? Has your Christianity cost you too much?
14. We are all aware that the Devil is alive and well on planet earth. He will do everything he possibly can to place obstacles in the way of those who want to live the true life of discipleship. "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12, *GNB*)
15. Even love can cause a response of hate or suspicion. What have you done or what can you do to overcome those obstacles in your life?
16. Read Mark 8:35-37. Think over your life at the present time. Are you trying to obtain an ever larger part of this world? Or are you truly more concerned with becoming like Jesus and following Him no matter what the consequences?
17. Ask yourself this question: What gives real meaning and purpose in your life? If you were to die today, what would people say about the impact of your life? Do people think of you as a true disciple of Christ?
18. We know that Jesus was a man of continuous action. He was healing, preaching, teaching, and traveling almost nonstop. Does He expect us to do something similar?
19. Can our neighbors or our fellow workers count on us to step in and help them in whatever way they need to be helped? Are we capable of loving others as much as we love ourselves?
20. The God of the entire universe wants to be our Friend. More than that, He wants us to tell others of the advantages of that friendship. We are to go into the world to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them. (Matthew 28:18-20) Are we proud to be representatives of Jesus?
21. A real Christian is not just someone who agrees to a certain set of doctrines. Those doctrines are to teach us about the Person who is our best Friend. Are we prepared to tell others what

Jesus has done for us?

22. On one occasion the disciples had been arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom. Each one wanted to be “prime minister.” Finally, one of the disciples actually asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus called a child, set him up in front of them, and said, “I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3, *GNB*)
23. What is the relationship between becoming like a child and being a disciple? The most important characteristic of a child is his desire to observe, to learn, and to copy what he sees. That is the way he grows. Ellen G. White put it in these words:
- It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}
24. Where does character come from? Our lives are molded by everything we see, hear, and experience. Are we truly seeing, hearing, and experiencing Jesus Christ? Or are our lives so full of entertainment, work, competition, and the activities of daily survival that we hardly have time to think about Jesus? If we were like a small child in our relationship with Jesus, we would hang on His every word and His every action and do everything we could to imitate Him. That is what Paul did. He said, “Imitate me, then, just as I imitate Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1, *GNB*) And he challenges us to do the same.
25. The Devil has made sure that our world is full of every possible distraction to take our minds away from the central and most important truths. Are we filling our minds full of Jesus or full of the world’s “cares and responsibilities”?

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