

# ***Discipleship***

## ***Discipling Spiritual Leaders***

Lesson #11 for March 15, 2014

Scriptures: Luke 6:12-16,20-49; John 16:7-14; Jeremiah 50:31; Isaiah 57:15; Acts 1.

1. This lesson will focus on how and why Jesus chose the twelve named disciples. For them, He was both a Master Teacher and a Master Trainer. They needed both the knowledge that He could give them and also the experience so they could follow up on His work after He was gone. Teaching implies the sharing of knowledge; training suggests learning skills through practice and discipline.
2. Looking back at Jesus and the disciples that He chose in His day, what do you think were the most important things He needed to teach them? Were there some very important things He needed to “unteach” them? It is often more difficult to get people to abandon ideas that they have already incorporated into their thinking than it is to teach them new ideas. (See Luke 18:31-34; and Acts 1:6) The Jews thought that some of the passages in the Old Testament which we now realize apply to the second coming were going to be fulfilled at the first coming.
3. How many things that we believe to be true are really not true? How do you teach someone to be self-sacrificing, ready to live in hardship, even be willing to die for a certain kind of truth? Can such a thing be “taught”? Or, must it be “caught” by association with someone who exhibits those characteristics over a period of time? Or, is one only born with that?
4. Remember that Jesus needed to produce not only disciples but also disciple makers. He realized that He was handing over to the disciples the task of spreading the gospel to the world!
5. How many people do you think were regularly following Jesus at the time when He chose the twelve? Clearly, He chose the twelve from among a larger group. And notice that after His death when they chose Matthias to replace Judas, they were choosing among people who also had been His followers since His baptism. (See Acts 1:21-22.)
6. What did Jesus do before choosing the twelve? He went up into a mountain and prayed all night. (Luke 6:12-13) What do you suppose He was praying about that night? Didn't God already know exactly what each of those disciples would do in the future? He knew every detail of their lives. Was He imparting that information to Jesus? Did they talk about others who were eventually not chosen? How should we go about choosing disciples and disciple makers in our time? Did Jesus know that most of the twelve would end up being martyrs? Did He tell them?
7. There is no evidence in the Gospels that He appointed any one of His disciples to be a bishop or elder over any of the others or set up any kind of church organization. Yet, passages like Acts 15 make it very clear that they knew how to organize themselves and to share responsibilities. Compare Acts 6:1-6.
8. We know that to become a true disciple, we must receive a certain amount of information through teaching and a certain amount of experience through training. In our day, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in that teaching and training? What is the role of Bible study? Prayer?
9. Jesus had traveled and worked with most, if not all, of those twelve that He chose for some period of time—some of them for two years—before He “chose” them. Does that imply that we should get to know people quite well before we choose them for church offices?
10. In contrast to other world religions, Christianity places a high value on intelligence, thinking, and even imagination. Christians are expected to think, compare, and study. At its root, Christianity is a rational faith. But, there are groups within modern Christianity who believe that a certain type of emotional feeling is the essence of their religion. Some feel that unless one can talk in tongues, he is not even a Christian! But, when questioned, it becomes obvious that many of those people have very little knowledge of Scripture. Is there a very clear relationship between knowledge and experience for every Christian? Or, should we expect some Christians to focus more on knowledge while others focus more on experience? Isn't that typical for human experience? To be a leader in the church, is it more important to have Bible knowledge or experience?

11. How does God expect us to get the information we need to be good followers of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Does that require daily reading and studying of Scripture?
12. Read the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5-7. Compare Luke 6:20-49. Do you think Jesus gave all of that information in one sermon? For how long was He talking? Did the people in His day sit quietly and listen to Him talk for most of the day? We would find that very hard to do in our day. Why do the words in Luke contrast somewhat with the words in Matthew? Why did Jesus commend those who were poor, hungry, weeping, and even hated? And by contrast, what is wrong with being rich, full, laughing, or being respected? Is the difference that the former group recognizes their needs while the latter group does not?
13. There are some who would suggest that what is essential is the knowledge of a certain set of beliefs recognized by their church. Ellen White said: "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed." *Review and Herald* Dec. 15, 1885, par 16; *Selected Messages, bk. 1*, 416; See also *5MR* 49; *3SM* 21. What did she mean by that? Are the Ten Commandments a creed? Are the 28 fundamental beliefs a creed?
14. Seventh-day Adventists have taken the three angels' messages as our special responsibility to present to the world in our day. Do we know how to present that kind of information in the best possible way? Why don't we talk about the three angels' messages as much these days?
15. We have spoken in earlier lessons about mentoring. Is that the same as discipling? Through mentoring could we gain the necessary knowledge and experience to produce the unselfish love that Christians must show?
16. It has been noticed by many people studying the Scriptures that Jesus apparently chose His disciples from among the humbler, less-educated class of people. Why did He do that? If He could have, would He have chosen Paul and/or Luke as disciples? Those were perhaps the two most educated people among the early Christian group, and they wrote most of the New Testament. In our day, why did God choose Ellen White? Was it because the two men He had apparently spoken to earlier refused to do the job? Was Ellen White just a poor third choice? Or, like Mathias, was she one of several qualified for the job?
17. Would Jesus have chosen Paul or Luke instead of Matthias to replace Judas? Did He, in effect, do that in Acts 8&9? Is God calling each of us not only to be a disciple but also to train disciples? Or, are some Christians not capable of being disciples and certainly not capable of training disciples? Does God expect every one of us to play some role as a disciple and as a trainer of disciples? Would Jesus have chosen you as a disciple?
18. Was there something special about the twelve that He chose?

**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 colaborers; 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. [Acts 4:13] (*Desire of Ages* 250.1)

That they might have success in their work they were to be given the power of the Holy Spirit. Not by human might or human wisdom was the gospel to be proclaimed, but by the power of God. [Zechariah 4:6]—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 17. [Bold type and content in brackets is added.]

19. Read Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 11:29; Jeremiah 50:31; and Isaiah 57:15. It should be very clear

from these passages that proud men are not likely to make good disciples. Is it possible for children to have a very good knowledge of Scriptures and be ready to serve God—to be humble and teachable? Compare the experience of Jesus. (Luke 2:46-47)

20. Do you think any of the Pharisees or Sadducees would have accepted a position as a disciple of Jesus? Would Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea have agreed to become a disciple openly before Jesus's death? It is very interesting to note that apparently many of those who were priests and Pharisees later became Christians. (Acts 6:7; Acts 15:5) What was it that convinced those apparently well-educated men to become followers of Jesus? Did they all become humble and teachable? What is implied by Acts 15:5? Nicodemus supported the church with his wealth before he died. (DA 177.1)
21. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19 and Philippians 2:3. What do these verses suggest about the qualities of leadership? Do we see many church leaders today who are ready to be servants of everyone? Are church leaders in our day known especially for their humility?
22. How effective was the teaching and training done by Jesus? No doubt, in His day, Palestine—especially Galilee—would have been considered a backwater location in the Roman Empire. And yet, no one alive in those days impacted the world even close to as much as Jesus did. Why was that? If we could have looked in on the disciples on crucifixion weekend, it might have looked like Jesus had not been very successful. But, His teachings as passed on by His disciples are transforming millions of lives even today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!
23. Read Acts 1. There are several interesting things to notice in this chapter. First of all, the disciples still had a faint hope that Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom. (Acts 1:6) It is also interesting to notice that suddenly Jesus's mother and His brothers had become faithful followers as well. Earlier, they had been very critical of Jesus.
24. It is also interesting to notice that the eleven disciples who were left felt they could not move on with their work until Judas had been replaced. Clearly for them, it was important to be twelve! How much do we know about Matthias? What did he accomplish after being chosen as a replacement? What do we know about Joseph Barsabbas otherwise known as Justus, the righteous one? Did he give up because he was not chosen? Or, did all of these people move on with what they had been doing earlier—representing Christ in the best way they could? There is no question about the fact that their lives were transformed by their experience with Jesus.

As Christ's representatives the apostles were to make a decided impression on the world. The fact that they were humble men would not diminish their influence, but increase it; for the minds of their hearers would be carried from them to the Saviour, who, though unseen, was still working with them. The wonderful teaching of the apostles, their words of courage and trust, would assure all that it was not in their own power that they worked, but in the power of Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 22,23.

25. In our day, could we live lives such that people would look not at us but at Jesus through us?
26. It is clear that the disciples and the other apostles such as Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Silas, and Mark that we know about became humble, fearless, courageous, and brave, willing to dedicate their entire lives to being ambassadors for Jesus Christ and even to die.
27. Soon after choosing those first twelve disciples, He sent them out two by two to work in areas that He had already visited in Galilee.

All over the field of Christ's labor there were souls awakened to their need, and hungering and thirsting for truth. The time had come to send the tidings of His love to these longing hearts. To all these the disciples were to go as His representatives. The believers would be led to look upon them as divinely appointed teachers, and when the Saviour should thus be taken from them they would not be left without instructors.

On this first tour the disciples were to go only where Jesus had been before them, and had made friends. Their preparation for the journey was to be of the simplest

kind. Nothing must be allowed to divert their minds from their great work, or in any way excite opposition and close the door for further labor.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 351.2,3.

28. It is interesting to notice that He instructed the twelve not to go into Gentile territory or to Samaria. Later, when He sent out the 72, He did not give them those restrictions. In earlier lessons, we talked about the tremendous lengths to which Jesus went to break down the wall of partition that existed in the minds of most Jews against associating with anyone but other Jews.
29. Have you ever asked yourself if you could have been one of the twelve disciples? Do you think you could have done it? Are there characteristics in your life that Jesus would value?
30. Surely, the time is coming when Jesus needs as many true disciples as possible. As we face the end of our world's history, should we be mentoring as many people as possible?
31. Sometimes, those of older age and more experience despair as they look at the younger generation coming behind them. But, remember that eventually—if Jesus does not return in our time because we have not done what we should—we will have to hand over the work to that generation. Are we mentoring them adequately and correctly?
32. Suppose that God should appear to you and assign you the task of choosing disciples among the church members you know or perhaps friends with whom you are very well acquainted. Who would you choose? Why would you choose them?
33. Today, most of our church leaders are chosen by some kind of nominating committee. Do our nominating committees do as well as Jesus did in choosing the twelve? We realize that Jesus knew those disciples very well before He chose them. His Father had probably revealed to Him even the future experiences of those twelve. We do not have that privilege in our day.
34. Often in our choosing of church leaders, we are limited by not just their capabilities but by their availability and willingness to serve. Do we carefully think through what skills people have exhibited before we choose them for a job? If we can find people who are well-suited to their jobs and enjoy what they are doing, they will likely do good jobs. It has been said, "Find something you love to do, and you'll never work again in your life!" What is implied by that expression?
35. Are we actually told why Jesus chose the twelve which He did choose? Were they the ones who were available? Would you have been ready to drop your work and walk away from your job as did Matthew, Peter, Andrew, James, John, and others?
36. The twelve that Jesus chose were not only disciples or learners, they were also apostles. The word *apostle* means "one who has been sent." The Latin for *apostle* is "missionary." But, it actually implies something more like ambassador. Jesus recognized that after He was gone those disciples and apostles were to go to the world as His ambassadors. They were to act on His behalf.
37. If Jesus came to your church and announced that He was choosing twelve disciples, who would He pick? Would you be among them? When Jesus was about to leave His disciples, He promised them that He would give them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. (John 16) Does that imply that they still had things to learn? What is implied by the idea that we have "present truth" in our day? Do we still have things to learn? There are some Christians who look back at the early experiences after Pentecost as if that was a perfect time. There were a lot of problems even then. Some have suggested that the fifth book of the New Testament should not be entitled "The Acts of the Apostles" but rather "The Mistakes of the Apostles." How much of their experience could or should be duplicated in our day?

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