

## ***Discipleship***

### ***The Harvest and the Harvesters***

Lesson #12 for March 22, 2014

Scriptures: John 1:40-46; 4:28-35; Luke 24:47-53; Acts 1:6-8; Matthew 9:36-38; Luke 15.

1. In our last lesson, we talked about preparing disciple makers. This lesson is a continuation of that lesson. It focuses on Jesus's instructions and how they were carried out by His disciples in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Remember how Jesus called the twelve.
2. While there may be some usefulness in modern leadership theories, we must focus first on correctly understanding the gospel when it comes to making Christian disciples. When we have become true Christians ourselves, we can help those we choose to mentor in becoming Christians also. This involves several things: Bible study, prayer, witnessing or service, and recognizing that the Holy Spirit is to use us and that we are not to use Him. It involves recognizing our sinfulness, being grateful for God's work in us, being willing to surrender to His guidance, and feeling a burning fire inside us to share what we have learned. Is that why Paul called himself a slave? (Romans 1:1)
3. How would things be different if God had given angels the task of finishing the gospel? Couldn't they have come down and appeared as human beings to spread the gospel? Satan will try that at the end! Why did God choose us to do that task? It certainly cannot be because we are doing a better job than angels! Could it be that we need to witness because of what it does for our own spiritual experience? (1 Corinthians 4:9)
4. Read John 1:40-46; 4:28-30; 15:26-27; and 19:35-36. Jesus clearly instructed His first followers about witnessing. He gave them His own personal example; and then, He told them to go out and do the same. They did, and they were blessed by God. Later, when Jesus departed, He left the Holy Spirit to guide them and to guide us to do the same.
5. Evangelism has been defined by some as "beggars telling other beggars where to find bread." Do we understand what is implied by that and how to do it?
6. When Andrew met Jesus, he very quickly went to find his brother Peter and to tell him the good news. Couldn't any of us have done that? Do we think that telling the good news is an urgent task? As far as we can tell by reading the New Testament, Peter soon outshone Andrew in every way. Did Andrew ever feel slighted? Peter was one of the inner three; Andrew was not. How many of God's shining lights have been brought to the gospel by others who are completely unknown? There is a story told about an evangelist who went to Ireland and conducted an extensive evangelistic series and managed to baptized only one person. No doubt, he thought his efforts were essentially a failure. But, that one convert was the ancestor of Billy Graham. So, were his efforts wasted?
7. Read Luke 24:47-53; Acts 1:6-8; and 16:6-10. Viewed in the larger context, these verses seem to be exactly the opposite of what Jesus wants us to do. Why do we need to wait for the Holy Spirit? Is it because the Holy Spirit is not ready? Certainly not! We are the ones who are not ready. The Holy Spirit will use us when we are properly prepared. God is waiting for us; we are not waiting for Him. (2 Peter 3:1-12) How should we get ready?
8. During His lifetime here on this earth, Jesus demonstrated a complete dependence upon His Father and the Holy Spirit. Are we prepared to show such complete dependence on the Holy Spirit? It is very difficult for us as selfish human beings to admit that we are completely dependent. Paul was prepared to enter Bithynia. But, the Holy Spirit told him to go to Macedonia instead. How does the Holy Spirit want to guide us in our day? How

can we learn and teach patience and the willingness to wait on the Lord?

9. Read Mark 6:7-13; Matthew 10:5-15,23; 16:14-20; 18:17-20; 28:18-20; and John 20:21-23. Very shortly after officially calling His disciples, Jesus sent them out to minister in Galilee. He sent them to places where He had already gone and had prepared the ground. He told them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. He gave all of them the “keys to the kingdom of heaven.” What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

Peter had expressed the truth which is the foundation of the church’s faith, and Jesus now honored him as the representative of the whole body of believers. He said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

**The keys of the kingdom of heaven are the words of Christ. All the words of Holy Scripture are His, and are here included.** These words have power to open and to shut heaven. They declare the conditions upon which men are received or rejected. Thus the work of those who preach God’s word is a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. Theirs is a mission weighted with eternal results.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 413.6-414.1. [Bold type is added.]

10. Jesus told His disciples to treat their task as very urgent. They were not even supposed to greet people on the way. Why did He tell them that? In those days, greetings took a long time; and they were on an urgent mission. What does that mean for us?
11. If we truly believe—as Jesus said—that we have been given the task of sharing the “bread” with other beggars, isn’t He willing to give us the necessary skills, talents, capabilities, and strength we need to do that? How do we find the people who are truly spiritually hungry?
12. It is very easy for modern Adventists and other Christians to believe that the pastor is much better qualified than we are; therefore, he should do the evangelizing. If there was ever a time when a Leader was more qualified than His followers, it certainly was the case of Jesus with His first disciples. But, He sent them out. And all they had to work with was His previous instructions and His personal example. What does He give us to work with in our day? We have a lot more information and guidance available to us than they did.
13. We must remember that every one of us is given a task or tasks to do. Sometimes, church leaders suggest that only certain people are capable of doing the task. But, Jesus sent out all of His disciples—even Judas—to evangelize Galilee! Don’t we all have talents?
14. It is interesting to notice that in Matthew 9:36-38 Jesus said we are to pray to God to send out more harvesters. He did not say that we just need to work harder.
15. But, in order to harvest or even to prepare to harvest, we need to go out and find the fields that are ready. It is very easy for church members to cling to each other and focus most of their efforts on maintaining their group. But, Jesus said almost nothing about maintaining the group. He gave us instructions for going out and praying for more harvesters.
16. We need to recognize that the church body itself has legitimate needs. How do we find the right balance between meeting the needs within the church and the needs of the community around us? What would happen if every church member was looking for opportunities to share the gospel outside of the church? Wouldn’t most of the problems within the church disappear? In fact, that church would probably be exploding!
17. Read Luke 15. In this chapter Jesus talked about three things that were apparently lost.

*Lost* is a very neutral word, a very generous term for those who are waiting to receive the gospel. We are not to call them rebels or even outsiders. How often do we turn people away by our Adventist vocabulary? When we say someone is lost, we place the burden of finding him on the finder. And if we are faithful followers of Christ, that means us.

18. In Luke 15 we notice that the sheep recognized that it was lost, but it did not know how to find its way home. The shepherd placed the ninety-nine other sheep at risk while he searched for the lost one. The woman's coin did not know it was lost. But, it still had value, and the women went searching for it because it had value. The lost son became that way intentionally. He was "lost" because he did not realize the truth about his father. When he finally went home hoping for a better meal, the father showed so much love that he must have wondered why he ever went away. But, when talking with the father, the older brother called himself a slave! He was just as lost as was his brother! And he certainly did not really know his father. Do we know our Father? Could we cause rejoicing to heaven?
19. We need to remember why Jesus told these three parables recorded in Luke 15. It was in response to the accusation against Him that He ate with sinners! What would be the equivalent of eating with sinners in our day? Are we so fully grounded in the gospel truth that we are comfortable in associating with people who have differing ideas?
20. So, in light of these three stories, how do we become better finders?

This is the service that God has chosen—"to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke, . . . and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Isa. 58:6,7. When you see yourselves as sinners saved only by the love of your heavenly Father, you will have tender pity for others who are suffering in sin. You will no longer meet misery and repentance with jealousy and censure. When the ice of selfishness is melted from your hearts, you will be in sympathy with God, and will share His joy in the saving of the lost.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 210.2-3.

21. How does God view a lost world? Do we feel any of the urgency for spreading the gospel that He feels? When Christ sent out the twelve, we are not told how successful they were. Later, when He sent out seventy or seventy-two, they came back rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them. (Luke 10:17) After His death and resurrection, they began to realize the real challenge that they were up against. How did they feel?

These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37.2.

22. Do you honestly feel like a beggar ready to tell other beggars where to find the bread? Have you found the bread? Do you think that you can honestly tell others where and how to discover the gospel? In what ways could you help them?
23. Is your church more focused on maintaining and caring for itself? Or, more focused on reaching out to others?
24. Read John 15:1-10. What is the essential message of this passage? The only way we can bear fruit is to be attached to the Vine. Do we really understand what is required to be

attached to the Vine? We are not supposed to be attached to the pastor or the Sabbath school teacher but to the Vine. As you look around you in your church, do you see people acting as if they truly have a connection with the Vine? What kind of outreach or evangelistic activities has your church successfully carried out in the last year or two?

25. Is the problem that we do not know how to let the Holy Spirit guide? That is not easy for selfish human beings!
26. In working with His first disciples, Jesus found that the hardest task of all was to get them to unlearn many things that they believed were true. They were sure that the Messiah was going to help them conquer the Romans! How could they possibly accept the idea that their Leader, the true Messiah, was going to end up being killed by the Romans?
27. Is it more difficult to unlearn wrong lessons? Or, to learn new lessons? History tells us that unlearning is probably the more difficult task. How can the Holy Spirit through Scripture and association with others of like mind help us to unlearn mistaken ideas?
28. A careful look at the instructions given in the New Testament demonstrates that we are given basically three or four tasks: Bible study, prayer, and witnessing and/or service. Do we know exactly what God is calling us to do in each of these areas? Have we learned how to practice meaningful Bible study? Are our prayers meaningful conversations with God? If these first two criteria were fully in place, would we have any trouble witnessing? Paul called himself a slave. (Romans 1:1) Why was that? He felt the fire of the gospel burning in his bones so much that he could not keep quiet about it. Would that be true about us?
29. Remember that John 15 teaches us that we do not need to struggle to bear fruit. We need to struggle to stay connected to the Vine.
30. Read Matthew 9:35-38. This lesson has focused on harvesting and harvesters. Sometimes, we overlook the fact that harvesting requires a lot of preparation: Preparing the soil, planting the seed, watering, cultivating, and then, finally, harvesting. Do we understand how each of these steps applies to the gospel? Jesus was able to tell His disciples to go out and harvest because He had spent a lot of time preparing for the harvest.
31. Read Psalm 126:6. Doesn't this verse suggest that preparing the soil, sowing the seed, etc. is a hard task?
32. Think how you would feel if you actually were able to lead a friend to the gospel. The excitement of bringing someone to the truth excites the angels! (Luke 15:7,10)
33. Look at what your church is doing. How many of its activities would be considered sowing? What about even preparing the soil? Are you willing to put in some hard work doing that? What activities would be cultivating or nurturing? All of these things need to precede the harvesting. Farmers know when a certain field is ready to be harvested. They do not waste their time trying to harvest a field that is not ready. As you look around your community, can you tell which "fields" are ready for harvesting and which fields still need cultivating? Is the Holy Spirit willing to guide us in doing that?

**© 2014, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know how you are using them.**

[Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: January 20, 2014

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Discipleship-2014\SS-12-Discipleship-2014\_03\_22-Fin+.wpd