

Discipleship

Discipling the Sick

Lesson #5 for February 1, 2014

Scriptures: Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17; Mark 2:1-12; Philippians 4:4-9; 1 John 3:20-22; John 11:37-44.

1. Perhaps, this lesson could best be summarized in these words of Matthew:

³⁰Large crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the dumb, and many other sick people, whom they placed at Jesus' feet; and he healed them. ³¹The people were amazed as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they praised the God of Israel. (Matthew 15:30-31, *GNB*; compare 5:16)

2. This lesson is about discipling the sick. What was the purpose of Christ's healing ministry? Why did He spend so much time healing the sick?

During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching. His miracles testified to the truth of His words, that He came not to destroy, but to save. Wherever He went, the tidings of His mercy preceded Him. Where He had passed, the objects of His compassion were rejoicing in health and making trial of their new-found powers. Crowds were collecting around them to hear from their lips the works that the Lord had wrought. His voice was the first sound that many had ever heard, His name the first word they had ever spoken, His face the first they had ever looked upon. Why should they not love Jesus and sound His praise? As He passed through the towns and cities He was like a vital current, diffusing life and joy.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 19,20.

In the face of all his wonderful works they turned away from Him, who, by the beauty of his doctrine and his mercy and benevolence, had called thousands to his side; who had relieved suffering humanity, so that entire cities and villages were freed from disease, and there was no work for a physician among them. (*2SP* 285.3; *4Red* 98.3)

3. Jesus's healing ministry was miraculous. No one who takes the Scriptures seriously can doubt that. He was a kind of walking hospital. There was nothing else like it! Even Gentiles came from all the countries around to be healed.
4. Loma Linda University Health now has six hospitals, eight schools, cares for about 700 hospital patients per day, one and one-half million outpatients per year, and has more than 4000 employees. More than three-quarters of our patients report 9 or 10 on their patient satisfaction surveys. Our patients come from all over the world, and our students come from 80 to 90 different countries. But, what makes us different from other hospitals?
5. Are we truly an extension of the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ? We do not pretend to perform miracles. However, if in the days of Jesus you had showed them an x-ray revealing the inner workings of a person's body, wouldn't they have considered it miraculous? How many of the technological advances that we take for granted today would have been considered miraculous in the days of Jesus?
6. So, what about it? What if someone—a person of God—should come to Loma Linda University Health and walk through the hospital and heal every sick person? What would we say? How would the newspapers report that? Would Loma Linda be out of business?

What do you think would happen the next day? Did Jesus heal just to attract people?

7. Read Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17; and John 9:1-3. Don't we all want to be a part of the plan of salvation? In Greek the word for *salvation* (*sozo*) also means healing. Does that mean that we all need healing? The incredible thing about the biblical promises in these verses is that God promises to take our sins and our diseases upon Himself.
8. What were the attitudes and beliefs of the ancients about sickness and its cause or causes? Remember the story of Job. Job's friends were sure that his terrible sufferings were a result of some hidden sin of which he was guilty. Jesus's disciples believed that the man born blind was born that way because of his sins or the sins of his parents. (John 9:1-2) What are the implications of those beliefs? People who were sick needed forgiveness from God, not just treatment. Why did people come long distances to see Jesus?
9. In ancient times, there were polytheistic pagan religions that believed in deities who healed. But, none of those deities ever agreed to take the sicknesses upon themselves! It is interesting to notice that in some ancient countries, substitutes were actually sacrificed in the place of an ill king, hoping to transfer his punishment to the sacrifice! But, certainly there were no pagan religions suggesting that the king should die on behalf of his subjects!
10. It is important to notice in Isaiah 53:4 that the Hebrew word for *griefs* really means sicknesses or diseases.
11. Why do you think the immense crowds were so attracted to Jesus? Was it His charisma? Did they appreciate His love? Did they find it much easier to understand His preaching than the preaching of the Pharisees? How many of them came, initially, at least, to be healed?
12. Read Mark 2:1-12. (Compare *Ministry of Healing* pages 73-77.) The paralytic's illness was largely a result of his own sins. He longed for spiritual healing most of all. Christ met him at the point of His greatest need—his feelings of guilt because of his sins.
13. It is also interesting to note that the Jewish people largely believed the idea that sickness came from sin. So, ultimately, in order to heal the sickness, one had to deal with the sin. Therefore, Christ met them where they were. And He did so by demonstrating the fact that He was God Himself; and, therefore, He could forgive sins; and He proved that by healing the man right in front of them!
14. The man himself had no power to come to Jesus. However, Ellen White, told us that Jesus was aware of the man's condition and knew he was coming. That was revealed to Him by the Father. It was in Peter's house that Jesus was preaching when the group approached. Have you ever wondered exactly how they climbed on the roof and managed to make a hole big enough to let the man down? Did they repair the roof when they were done?
15. What can we learn from Jesus's exchange with the teachers of the law who were present? Jesus proved to all who were willing to accept it that He had the power to forgive sins; and thus, He was God. Although He was human, together He and His Father planned every detail of His life. No doubt, They did this in those long prayer sessions each night.
16. Ellen White said that the young man was so relieved to hear Jesus forgive his sins that he did not even hope for anything more. His physical healing was an unexpected bonus!
17. Unfortunately, as in Jesus's day, despite our best efforts, every person will eventually die. Is that why Jesus always followed His healings with an attempt to point His patients to everlasting life? In what ways could we follow that example?
18. Read Luke 8:26-39. (See also *Great Controversy* 515.1.) Notice some interesting aspects of this story. 1) Jesus traveled by boat across the Sea of Galilee just to meet this demon-

possessed man. (Matthew suggests there were two men while Mark and Luke mention only one. See Matthew 8:28-34.) 2) After healing the two men by sending their demons into the pigs causing the pigs to run down the cliff and into the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was asked by the Jews living in Decapolis and who owned the pigs to leave their territory. 3) The demon-possessed man/men wanted to return with Jesus. However, Jesus told them to go back and tell what had happened to them. They were the first missionaries to the Gentiles! 4) When Jesus returned to that area a short time later, thousands of people from that region came out to meet Him, and it was then that He fed the 4000 men—not counting women and children. (See Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10.) No doubt, hundreds, and maybe thousands, more were healed at that time; and the gospel was carried to that largely-pagan territory. He had earlier fed the 5000 Jews in Galilee. (John 6:1-15)

19. To what extent do worrying, stress, and psychological factors impact our health? Read Matthew 6:19-34; 1 Peter 5:7; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10; Philippians 4:4-9; and 1 John 3:20-22.
20. Loma Linda has been described by the *National Geographic Magazine* and other reputable sources as a “blue zone.” For whatever reasons, inhabitants of Loma Linda are some of the healthiest and most long-living people in the world. And we live in an area that has one of the worst health statistics in the U.S. What is the reason for the “blue zone”? It is true that we do not smoke; for the most part, we do not drink alcohol; most of us eat a healthier diet than the general public; but, every week we also have our Sabbath when we rest; and we have our hope of the soon return of Jesus Christ. To what extent do you think those factors impact our health? There is no question about the fact that anxiety, worry, and anger predispose to disease. Consider these words from Ellen White:

Each day has its burdens, its cares and perplexities; and when we meet how ready we are to talk of our difficulties and trials. So many borrowed troubles intrude, so many fears are indulged, such a weight of anxiety is expressed, that one might suppose we had no pitying, loving Saviour ready to hear all our requests and to be to us a present help in every time of need.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 121.

21. There is no question about the fact that greater peace can be had by a regular, trusting relationship with God.
22. Read Luke 7:11-17; Mark 5:21-43; and John 11:37-44. What do we learn from these three short stories? The Sadducees (see Acts 23:8) did not believe that life after death was even possible! The raising of Lazarus who had been dead for four days made them very angry. Is it important for us to recognize that God has the power to raise people from the dead? Seventh-day Adventists teach that according to Scripture (see John 5:27-29 and Revelation 20:13-14) everyone will be raised to life again either at the second coming or after the millennium at the third coming. To our nonbelieving friends, this might seem preposterous; but, we absolutely are certain that it is true. More than that, to His faithful followers, Jesus offers eternal life in a fantastic world where there will be no more trouble, sickness, disease, or death. These stories about Jairus’s daughter, the widow’s son, and Lazarus are supposed to teach us that this too-good-to-be-true offer is real.
23. Consider these points from Ellen White about the story of Lazarus. Jesus frequented the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus whenever He was in the region of Jerusalem. It is important to notice that Mary was one of Jesus’s closest followers. (Luke 8:1-3) When Lazarus became sick, Jesus was preaching, healing, and teaching on the other side of the Jordan River approximately a one day journey away. Clearly, Jesus understood the urgency of the need. He knew about Lazarus’s illness even before He was told by the

messenger. He delayed because He intentionally planned to raise Lazarus from the dead. This was His supreme miracle. He knew that whereas the Pharisees had opposed Him almost from the beginning of His ministry, the Sadducees had largely ignored Him. However, the Sadducees did not believe that there was/is life after death. They did not believe in a future inheritance of any kind.

24. Jesus knew that by raising Lazarus to life after he had been dead for four days, He would be challenging one of their most cherished teachings. They would be proven wrong. Thus, He would become public enemy number one for both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is interesting to notice in this context that Lazarus was the nephew of one of the Pharisees—Simon, the former leper. (*Signs of the Times*, May 9, 1900 par. 15; *Daughters of God* 239.4) Mary, Martha, and Lazarus may have come from a family of Pharisees!
25. On that occasion, Jesus made that incredible statement, “I am the resurrection and the life.” (John 11:25)
26. If Jesus does not plan to come back and rescue His faithful children, why did He bother to come the first time?
27. It was not only Jesus but also His disciples who carried on His healing ministry. Read Acts 3:1-16; 5:12-16; 9:36-42; 20:7-12; 1 Corinthians 12:7-9, 28-31; and James 5:13-16. Do these verses suggest that it was God’s intention that the healing ministry of Jesus should continue in His church? It certainly got people’s attention and convinced a lot of people to take His teachings seriously.
28. So, what are we supposed to learn from the healing ministry of Jesus Christ? How did He go about that ministry?

Some died in the days of Christ and in the days of the apostles because the Lord knew just what was best for them.—Letter 35, 1890; *MM* 17.1.

He went from house to house, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the distressed. He took the little children in His arms and blessed them, and spoke words of hope and comfort to the weary mothers. With unfailing tenderness and gentleness He met every form of human woe and affliction. (*Medical Ministry* 19.3)

29. In our day, how often do we tend to think of our enormous healthcare ministry as a kind of industry? Seventh-day Adventists may have the largest Protestant healthcare system in the world. We are not just faith healers or industry workers. **At least in theory, we are practicing our medical-care ministry for the purpose of making it possible for people to think more clearly and, thus, better understand the plan of salvation.**
30. Do some people in our world still think that disease is a result of sin? There certainly are diseases which are a direct result of sinful behaviors. Should such people be condemned? Or, should we treat them the best way we possibly can to restore their health while at the same time pointing them to a better way?
31. Even in our day in the lives of those who are not healed physically, it is possible to say that by faith in Jesus and trust in His Word every one of us will be raised; and we have the possibility of living forever with Him. For what more could we possibly ask?

© 2013, 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

Last Modified: December 8, 2013

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSSTG-Hart\Discipleship-2014\GPR- KH Added SS-5-2014-Discipleship--2014_02_01-Fin.wpd