

Discipleship

Discipling the “Ordinary”

Lesson #6 for February 8, 2014

Scriptures: Luke 2:21-28; Matthew 15:32-39; 16:13-17; Luke 12:6-7; 13:1-5; James 2:1-9.

1. This lesson is about the ministry of Jesus and discipling “ordinary” people. There are many stories about His ministry to fishermen, farmers, housewives, shepherds, soldiers, and even servants. Why do you think Jesus seemed to focus on those people instead of the Jewish leaders? Wouldn't it have been better if He had converted the Jewish leaders so that many people would follow those leaders and then become His followers?
2. Shouldn't Jesus have been born in the royal palace so He would immediately be recognized as having authority? Or, like on the road to Emmaus, did Jesus want to appeal to reason and logic rather than authority? (Luke 24:13-35) He wants each individual to be convinced for himself or herself.
3. Read Luke 2:21-28; Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 6:2-4; and Leviticus 12:8. These verses teach us that Jesus was born into the family of a poor carpenter. They could not even afford a lamb to offer as a sacrifice to celebrate the birth of the King of the Universe! Imagine His birth as a human being and His human parents were offering only turtle doves!

The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily toil. He was familiar with poverty, self-denial, and privation. This experience was a safeguard to Him. In His industrious life there were no idle moments to invite temptation. No aimless hours opened the way for corrupting associations. So far as possible, He closed the door to the tempter. Neither gain nor pleasure, applause nor censure, could induce Him to consent to a wrong act. He was wise to discern evil, and strong to resist it.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

4. It is beyond our comprehension to think that the Creator of the entire universe would choose to become a human being and not only that, but also to be born as an infant in a stable, laid in a manger—a feeding place for cows and donkeys. How does that impact us?
5. Read John 2:1-11 and Matthew 15:32-39. There are a number of lessons that we can learn from these two stories. In His first sign or miracle at the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus was at the home of a relative who was getting married. Now that Joseph was dead, Mary naturally turned to Jesus whenever there was a problem. Jesus did not make a big show of what He was going to do, but He simply told the attendants to fill with water the six large (about 100 quarts or liters each, the six totaling about 600 quarts) storage containers used for the cleansing ceremonies. Then, they drew the water out and took it to the head of the feast. It is important to notice that in both of these miracles, Jesus fed the people the ordinary food or drink to which they were accustomed. Of course, He provided the best possible drink and the best possible fish and bread!
6. The story of the feeding of the 4000 men (not counting women and children) really began much earlier. Read Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; and Luke 8:26-39. Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee in a boat just to reach the area of Gerasa, Gadara, or Gergesa. As we know, He healed one or possibly two demon-possessed men casting their demons into two thousand pigs which rushed down the hillside and drowned in the Sea of Galilee. He was in that territory only a short time before He was asked to leave. The formerly demon-possessed man/men wanted to go with Him back to Galilee, but He sent them to their homes to tell others what had happen to them. When Jesus returned to that territory a few months later, thousands of people came out to see Him and to learn if He really could do

what those demon-possessed men said He could do. It is interesting to notice that these two formerly demon-possessed men were the first missionaries sent by Jesus into Gentile territory.

7. Jesus had earlier fed the 5000 Jews as they were on their way to the Passover celebration. (See John 6.) When they had eaten of the five loaves and two fishes, the disciples gathered up 12 Jewish baskets of leftovers to benefit the “twelve tribes of Israel.” When He had finished feeding the 4000 men (not counting women and children) in the area of Decapolis, He gathered up seven baskets of food to feed the “seven nations of Canaan.”
8. Read Mark 1:16-20; compare John 1:35-42. Peter, Andrew, James, and John had known Jesus—James and John may have actually been related to Him—from the fall of A.D. 27 until the spring of A.D. 29. They had followed Him off and on during that period of time after His baptism at the Jordan River at the hands of John the Baptist. But, the time had come for them to take a deeper and more complete role in the work of Jesus.
9. As Jesus walked along the beach, He found the four of them with the father of James and John and the hired workers cleaning their nets after unsuccessfully fishing all night. Ellen White (*DA* 246.5-249.1) tells us that they talked that night about their prospects if they should join themselves to the ministry of Jesus. John the Baptist had recently been arrested and imprisoned. At that point, Jesus had left His ministry in Judea. The possibility that Jesus could be the Messiah they were looking for seemed ever more remote. They had just about decided that they needed to go back to their old profession. That is why they had been fishing that night. While Jesus was preaching, they were cleaning their nets!
10. After preaching for some time, what did Jesus do? He was sitting in Peter’s boat a few feet out into the water so that a larger number of people could see and hear Him. Then, He turned to Peter, the fisherman. Jesus, the Carpenter, said, “Push out into the water, and let down your nets to catch some fish.” Peter must have thought Jesus was crazy. Trying to fish with their big, bulky nets in the clear waters of the Sea of Galilee in the daytime seemed foolish to a fisherman! But, because of his respect for Jesus, he did what Jesus asked. The catch was unbelievable! Jesus could tell fish where to swim!
11. What are we supposed to learn from that story? Peter immediately was down on his hands and knees before Jesus, holding onto Jesus’s feet and saying, “Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8, *GNB*) Peter, along with the others, realized how foolish they had been in questioning Jesus’s abilities. This miracle proved to them more than almost any other could that Jesus could not only control the forces of nature but also could easily take care of them and their families for the rest of their lives.
12. Read Mark 6:1-3 and Matthew 13:54-57. Why did the people of Nazareth reject Jesus? When the “hometown Hero” came back to Nazareth, they were amazed at His preaching. They were looking forward to His performance of many miracles just as they had heard that He had done in other places. But, then they remembered the Boy who had grown up in their town, and they rejected Him.
13. Were the disciples that Jesus chose “ordinary” men? And what about the women who followed Jesus? See Luke 8:1-3. Jesus also attracted wealthy women!

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 4:8-13] (*The Desire of Ages* 250.1) [Bold and content in brackets is supplied.]

14. In light of these comments from Ellen White, do you think it would be correct to call these fishermen "ordinary"? Why was it that the poor were so much more willing to accept Jesus than the wealthy and influential? (Note that we will talk about the wealthy and the influential in future lessons.) Maybe the rich and influential did not feel any need!
15. Read Matthew 16:13-17. Don't these verses suggest that as Peter became more and more a faithful follower of Jesus, he opened his heart and his mind to the influences of the Holy Spirit? Did Peter really understand what he was saying? Read Matthew 26:75. But, despite all of that, when the real trial came, Peter denied Jesus three times. Then he ran out all the way to the Garden of Gethsemane and wished he might die. (*DA* 713.3; *19MR* 168.2; *RH*, December 26, 1899 par. 8) It is important to note as Ellen White suggested that when Jesus gave instructions to the women about their future gathering place in Galilee, He said, "Tell the disciples, and Peter." (Mark 16:7)
16. As He was preaching, why do you think that Jesus used so many commonplace illustrations and so much straightforward speech? Jesus knew that the "ordinary" people with whom He was working would be constantly encountering the objects of His illustrations and be reminded of what He had taught them.
17. Read Luke 12:6-7; 13:1-5; and Matthew 6:25-30. If we die before Jesus returns and He needs to recreate us, He needs to know the number of hairs on our heads! These verses make it very clear that God is fully aware of every detail of our lives. And that applies to every single person: "extraordinary" or "ordinary," educated or ignorant, male or female, slave or free. (Galatians 3:28)
18. In fact, Ellen White said, "Christ would have died for one soul in order that that one might live through the eternal ages."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 73. Elsewhere, she said, "One soul saved in the kingdom of God is worth more than ten thousand worlds like this." (*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1880 par. 1)
19. Read Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-37. After the experience at Pentecost, the Christian church grew at an explosive rate. There were several reasons for that: 1) Many of those converts had heard and seen Jesus and were impressed by His work. Many of them were probably also healed by Him. 2) The early Christians treated everyone equally. They met together in homes and even in the temple, and everyone—no matter what his social standing—was welcomed. They even sold property to help support the entire group. This kind of open fellowship was almost irresistible. How well are we doing at that kind of open fellowship in our churches today? Read 1 John 3:16-19. Do we ever close our hearts against the poor?
20. How many of us have been guilty of thinking that the work of spreading the gospel is the pastor's work?

In this closing work of the gospel there is a vast field to be occupied; and, more than ever before, the work is to enlist helpers from the common people. Both the youth and those older in years will be called from the field, from the vineyard, and from the workshop, and sent forth by the Master to give His

message. Many of these have had little opportunity for education; but Christ sees in them qualifications that will enable them to fulfill His purpose. If they put their hearts into the work, and continue to be learners, He will fit them to labor for Him.—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 269, 270.

21. So, in light of these words, who should be involved in spreading the gospel? Paul gave us some guidance. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Think how those words might apply to our world today. Who are the worldly-wise and educated people in our day? Are they friendly to the ideas of Christianity? Or, are they embracing atheism and evolution? It is still true that a large percentage of the “ordinary” people in North America believe in the Bible. That is not true in Europe and in some other parts of the world.
22. In trying to reach out to the less educated people of our generation, how can we be more user-friendly? Would it help to use an easier-to-understand translation such as the *Good News Bible* instead of the traditional *King James Version*?
23. Are there any valid class distinctions in the Christian church? We do not want to eliminate pastors or elders or deacons, but are they superior in any way? Why do you think Jesus said that those who want to be leaders should be servants of all? (Mark 9:35; Matthew 20:26)
24. You may consider yourself an “ordinary” Christian. Nevertheless, you are a unique son or daughter of God. What contributions can you make or are you making to your local church and your local Sabbath school? Think of others that you know in your church or Sabbath school. What contributions have you noticed that they are making? Do you think there are class distinctions still existing in your local congregation? What could you do to break those down?
25. Certainly, each one of us would recognize that Jesus was the most extraordinary and unique Person who has ever lived on this earth. And yet, for the first 30 years of His life, He acted and looked like an “ordinary” Person. His childhood is summarized in one verse: “And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.” (Luke 2:40, *NIV*)
26. Do you think the experience of the early Christians after Pentecost could happen in our day? Why? Or, why not? It was not long before even the disciples noticed that there were problems between groups. (Acts 6:1)
27. How many people in your church do little things that help the program to work smoothly? Have you thanked any of them recently? If you are one of them, has anyone thanked you?
28. Aren't you glad that Jesus focused His life primarily on “ordinary” people? You may think that you are “ordinary,” or you may feel very extraordinary; but, no one can claim that Jesus is not appealing to him or her.
29. What can we do as local churches and Sabbath school classes and even as individual Christians to better reach out to the “ordinary” people around us? What would happen if every Seventh-day Adventist Christian did that?

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