

# ***The Book of Luke***

## ***The Call to Discipleship***

Lesson #4 for April 25, 2015

Scriptures: Luke 5:1-11; 6:12-16; 9:1-6,23-25; 10:1-24; Matthew 10:5-15; 16:24-28.

1. This lesson will discuss what it means to be a disciple. How were the first disciples called? How did they respond? What did they think they were going to do? Be cabinet members?
2. Is Jesus Christ still calling for disciples? His call demands total commitment. Almost all of His first disciples ended up as martyrs! What does that mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**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]—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250.1. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

What changed them?

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 251.1.

3. Try to imagine the scene. Fishermen had worked all night and caught nothing. Jesus walked along the beach with many people following Him, people wanting to be healed and to listen to His words. Peter had known Jesus for many months. As the crowd pressed around Him, Jesus climbed into Peter's boat. He preached for a period of time. Then, in the middle of the day when the fishermen had cleaned their nets and they knew it was impossible to fish with a net in the clear waters, the Carpenter said to the fishermen: "Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch!" (Luke 5:4, *GNB*) Surely, to Peter and Andrew this seemed like a completely foolish exercise. But, they had come to trust the words of Jesus; and so, they did what He said.

As a result, the nets were so full that they had to ask James and John to bring their boat, and both boats were so full of fish that they were about to sink. Peter responded: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5:8, *NKJV*) In effect, was Peter saying, “How could I have doubted?” What do you think caused that response? (Compare Isaiah 6:5.) What do you think actually happened? Did God create or gather all those fish into that spot at that exact time just to make His point? Or, with His divine insight, did Jesus know that a large school of fish was just off the beach?

4. Would it be true also in our day that God has amazing things in store for us if we are willing to have faith? Do we really trust Him? Are we willing to humbly accept His guidance? Remember that the word *obedience—hupakoe* in Greek—means a humble willingness to listen.
5. Did the disciples have any idea what was implied when Jesus said, “From now on you will catch men”? (Luke 5:10, *NKJV*) Consider the work of fishermen. It is uncertain and dangerous, battling high waves with the continuous possibility of shipwreck or drowning as well as producing an uncertain income. Do those characteristics also apply to fishers of men? God does not ask us to go fishing on our own, either for fish or for people! How does God guide 21<sup>st</sup> century disciples to the place where they can fish for men?
6. It is important to note that disciples do not choose themselves. They must be called by the Master. Are all modern-day Christians called by Jesus? Or, does He pick out just a few to be called as He did 2000 years ago? We know that some of the disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew—had followed Jesus for some of the time starting almost two years earlier after His baptism and temptations near the Jordan. Levi Matthew, the local tax collector, was also called soon thereafter.
7. So, what was different about this time and this place that led Jesus to choose the twelve? Read **Luke 6:12-16**; 9:1-6; Matthew 10:5-15; and **Luke 8:1-3**. Jesus was beginning His Galilean ministry. He had already worked quietly for more than a year in Judea—sometimes with disciples and sometimes without. The time had come for Him to prepare the people who would be the ones to carry on His work after He was gone. They were to be called not only disciples but also apostles. Jesus prayed all night before that call. (Luke 6:12) What do you think He was praying about? Do you think He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit discussed each of the potential candidates by name? As Jesus was calling His disciples, Judas urged his way among them. Of course, Judas was hoping for a prominent position in the future earthly kingdom. Jesus tried to gently discourage him by mentioning the fact that He did not even have a place to lay His head. (Luke 9:58) Did any of the disciples have any idea that most of them would end up as martyrs? What did they think they were being chosen to do?
8. What is the difference between a disciple and an apostle? A disciple is a learner and a follower; an apostle is an ambassador—someone sent out to represent the sender. Do disciples need to be called?
9. Why did Jesus choose these particular men? We have already noted some comments from Ellen White. He chose fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot who wanted to overthrow the Roman government, and a doubter; and finally, He accepted the one who was to become His betrayer. They were to be trained as ambassadors. What does it mean to be like Jesus?

While Jesus was preparing the disciples for their ordination, one who had not been summoned urged his presence among them. It was Judas Iscariot, a man who professed to be a follower of Christ. He now came forward, soliciting a place in this inner circle of disciples. With great earnestness and

apparent sincerity he declared, “Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” Jesus neither repulsed nor welcomed him, but uttered only the mournful words: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man [294] hath not where to lay His head.” Matthew 8:19,20. Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom. This hope Jesus designed to cut off by the statement of His poverty.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 293.2.

God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 294.4.

10. God does not wait to pick out people who are perfect to be His disciples. If He did, He would find none. But, all of us have the potential to grow as children do if we are willing. God can see in advance what our potential is and whether or not we are willing to grow.
11. By carefully comparing all four Gospels, we know that Jesus sent out His disciples three different times that year to travel around Galilee—preaching, healing, and raising the dead! Why do you think raising the dead or even cleansing a leper was not significant enough of an event to be reported by any of the Gospel writers? Was Judas himself also able to do all those things? Could he have raised people from the dead?
12. Notice that the preparation of apostles is at least a three-step process. **First**, they must be called by Jesus Himself. They needed to so closely associate themselves with Jesus that they were willing to exhibit a total commitment even to the point of martyrdom. **Second**, Jesus gave them power and authority. We do not know exactly how He did that. Was there some kind of anointing? Then, He sent them forth with extraordinary powers—but a flawed message—to travel throughout Galilee. As they were teaching and healing, do you think they were talking about the future earthly kingdom that they thought they were going to be a part of? What is implied by the giving of “power and authority” to these disciples? Did each of the disciples have power to actually cleanse lepers and raise people from the dead?

**As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent.** Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.1. [Bold type is added.]

13. **Third**, Jesus “Sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:2, *NKJV*) As we have noted in previous lessons, Jesus intended for the healing and the preaching to go together. Healing is not just a way to attract people to one’s meetings. *Salvation* means healing. So, healing of the body is supposed to go along with healing of the soul and mind. Just as we recognize that sin under Satan’s domination has captured and ruined the human race, Christians must escape fully and completely from that control and place their total commitment on the side of Jesus Christ. Nothing is to stand between us and our Savior.
14. Jesus told His disciples to “take nothing for the journey” (Luke 9:3, *NKJV*)—no extra clothes, no food, no money, only a walking stick. Could we go forth to witness in our day under those conditions? Do you think that Satan works especially hard to oppose us in our day?

15. Eighteen months later, Jesus was approaching the end of His ministry; it was no longer safe for Him to work in Judea or Galilee. He was preparing for His final journey to Jerusalem. As He did so, He was working among the Samaritans and the Pereans on the east side of the Jordan River, places where the Jewish leaders had less influence, and He was safer. He knew that He only had a short time left. During this time He called 70—or possibly 72—others to be His disciples and apostles and also to go before Him into the cities, towns, and villages where He would work. (Luke 10:1-24) Who were the first missionaries to the Pereans? (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)
16. We often think of Jesus as being followed only by His 12 disciples. But, He had many other followers. (Luke 8:1-3) Soon after His resurrection, Peter addressed the followers of Jesus, and there were 120 of them. (Acts 1:15) First Corinthians 15:6 tells us that a short time later, there were 500 gathered to meet Him in Galilee. Does that mean that when He chose the 70, they were a select group? Only Luke tells us about the 70. It is interesting to note that Moses had appointed 70 elders to assist him in his work. (Numbers 11:16-17,24-25) The Sanhedrin was made up of 70 members. In any case, it is clear that Jesus did not intend to concentrate all His efforts on training only the twelve. How well are we doing at sharing the work of spreading the gospel in our local churches? Are we expecting the pastor to do all the work?
17. Look at the response when the 70 returned to Jesus. (Luke 10:17) Jesus went on to tell them that most of all they needed to be glad because their names were written in the books of heaven. Jesus was happy about the defeat of Satan, but He was even happier about the reward of the righteous.
18. Read Luke 10:24 and 1 Peter 1:12. Do angels agree with our messages? Those of us living at the end of this world's history have ready access to a lot of information that was not available to our predecessors. What are we doing with it? As we approach the second coming of Jesus Christ, we are reminded in Revelation 14:4 that the final followers of Jesus will be following the Lamb wherever He goes. Where did the Lamb go? To Calvary!
19. Read Luke 9:23-25; Matthew 16:24-28; and Mark 8:34-36. Clearly, there is no other way for a real Christian except following Jesus. What did Paul mean when he said: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"? (Galatians 2:20, *NIV*)
20. Did the disciples wonder what Jesus was talking about in Luke 9:23 when He talked about taking up a cross? They were certainly not thinking of denying themselves, taking up a cross, or following Jesus to martyrdom. True followers of Jesus must be totally committed to following Him. What would it mean to take up a cross in 2015?

When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. . . . It is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call. . . . Only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ.—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 99.

21. Has following Christ cost you anything?

Lifting the cross cuts away self from the soul, and places man where he learns how to bear Christ's burdens. We cannot follow Christ without wearing His yoke, without lifting the cross and bearing it after Him. If our will is not in accord with the divine requirements, we are to deny our inclinations, give up our darling desires, and step in Christ's footsteps.—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 69.2.

22. Think of the enormous amount of light which we have available that our predecessors did not have. We can see the fulfillment of Daniel 2, 7, and 8. We have the writings of Ellen White to shed additional light. With all of this before us, what a tragedy it would be for us to turn aside from that light and chase any goal in this world. **Should we be trying to gain as much of this world as possible without giving up heaven?** What would that mean?
23. Can you name some people not mentioned in the Bible who gave up everything for the privilege of following Jesus? Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Polycarp, etc. What did those people give up? What is each of us willing to give up?
24. Do we have a clear picture of what it means to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as outlined in Luke 9:23? Why does discipleship need to be so costly? When Jesus calls us, why does He demand such a total commitment?
25. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and others believed in Jesus more or less secretly until after His crucifixion. Could we be secret followers of Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? (See John 12:42-43.) Do we love human approval more than the approval of God?
26. Jesus lived His life and carried out His ministry in full self-recognition. He knew what He had come for, and He knew where He was going. How correct and complete is our self-recognition? Do we know where we are headed? Could we be a part of that group that will one day look up and see Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven?
27. On that occasion in Caesarea Philippi, Peter stated: "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16, *GNB*) Do you think Peter actually realized what he was saying? What kind of Messiah was he expecting? Remember that less than one year later at the trial of Jesus, he denied Jesus three times!
28. Immediately after Peter recognized that he was a sinful man, was the time when Jesus called him to be a disciple. Is Jesus waiting for that response in us? God has been calling followers since very early in this world's history. He called Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Daniel, and Isaiah just to mention a few. When we are called, we must first be followers or disciples before we can be true Christians. (Acts 11:26)
29. Read Luke 14:26-33. In these verses, Jesus was very blunt. He said we must love Him more than we love any family member, or any job we have, or any plan we have for our lives. In fact, "None of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have." (Luke 14:33)
30. It is interesting to note that there are certain characteristics that would prevent us from being disciples of Christ: 1) Less than a complete allegiance to Christ; 2) An incomplete submission to His will in our lives; and 3) Not being willing to forsake all that we have in favor of Jesus.

To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us. Once more, all that self-denial can say is: "He leads the way, keep close to him."—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 97.

31. Do we consider that being a disciple of Jesus is a wonderful privilege? If we choose to be disciples, when:

We embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids

him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him. . . . But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call.—*The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 99.

32. When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John on the beach, they left everything and followed Him. What did they say to their wives and families when they went home? Paul told us that Peter later traveled around with his wife. (1 Corinthians 9:5) Was she also called as a disciple and an apostle?
33. This lesson challenges us in an incredible way to turn our backs on this world and follow Jesus Christ. Are we ready?

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