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**Answering
Christ's
Call:**

**Lessons
on
Discipleship**

**A Devotional Bible-Study Guide
for Young Adults**



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Answering Christ's Call: Lessons on Discipleship



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**Answering Christ's Call:
Lessons on
Discipleship**

- 1. An Overview of Discipleship 10**
Indrani Ariyaratnam, Stuart Forbes, Jemuel Abe A. Frias, Fylvia Fowler Kline, Prameed and Lavona Pilli, Miguel Razon Jr.

- 2. Discipleship: Then and Now 19**
Malou Escasa, Jean B. Martinez, Chee Chiang Puen Jr., Lorilyn Dela Roca Sandoval, Armon Perez Tolentino, Genevieve Dawn M. Tolentino

- 3. Called to Discipleship by Jesus 28**
Karen Abdool-Hall, Amanda Sauder Maggard, Rita Simungoma Mooka, Darlington Mwendabai, Glenn G. Poole II

- 4. Lessons From Would-Be Disciples 37**
Wanda Acevedo, Sandra Araujo-Delgado, Peter Casillas, Jorge Figueroa, Julio Abner López, Efraín Velázquez II

- 5. Gender and Discipleship 46**
Julene K. Duerksen-Kapao, Kellie Hancock, Kate Hollingsworth, Adele Nash, Monique Owen, Chris Winzenried

- 6. Ethnicity and Discipleship 55**
Deena Bartel-Wagner, Steven Dovich, Carrie Purkeypile, Andrew Trecartin, Ralph Trecartin, Gary Wagner

- 7. Preparation for Discipleship 64**
Sara-May Colon, Nicole Hamm, Joy Kuttappan, Mark Lee Jr., Regie Samuel, Derek Sloan

8. Experiencing Discipleship 73

Mesnick M. W. Ataupah, Roy Maju Hutasoit, Daniel Saputra,
Posman Simanjuntak, Henky Wijaya, Laste Wijaya

**9. Following the Master: Discipleship in
Action 82**

Yashikra M. Bishop, Sandra Blackmer, Peter J. Chiomenti, Kristi
Geraci, Alice Timmer, Jamie Timon

10. Discipleship Under Pressure 91

Amanda Ernst, Naomi Ernst, Karen Pires, Kevin C. Pires, Ron
Reese, Sylvia Reese

11. More Lessons in Discipleship 100

Michael G. Hamilton, Twyla Geraci, Carolyn Macomber, A. Allan
Martin, Tim Poirier, Bonita Joyner Shields

12. Mission and Co-mission 109

Rodney A. Palmer, Vicki Redden, Jan Yakush, Allison Zollman,
Franke J. Zollman, Kandace Zollman

13. Patterns of Discipleship 118

Roy Maju Hutasoit, Verawati Ludji Leo, Hannes Limbong, David
Dane Ricky, Eko Tulistyawati Ricky, Bruce Gerald Jones Sumendap

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This Quarter's Illustrator



Eh Moo Carr, formerly known as Eh Moo Hmun, was born in Yangon, Myanmar. She came to the United States at the age of 11 with her parents, two older brothers, and her younger sister. She received her Bachelors of Science in Biology from Indiana University and is working on her Masters in Business. She also received her Certification in Interior Decorating from Penn Foster Career School. She enjoys creating paintings to match the decor of her clients' homes and offices and finds her inspiration from the Bible and nature. She and her husband reside in California where she supports her husband's music ministry by working full time as a data manager/programmer and part time as a Home Interiors consultant. Her artwork can be viewed on <http://www.livinglovecreations.com>.

Getting the most Out of CQ

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. CQ's purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the *Adult Bible Study Guide* find that because CQ deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to CQ each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of CQ is about 70,000.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
 - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
 - "**Logos**" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
 - "**Testimony**" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.
 - "**Evidence**" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
 - "**How-To**" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
 - "**Opinion**" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
 - "**Exploration**" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.

An Overview of Discipleship



“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people’ ”
(Matt. 4:18, 19, NRSV).

Fishers of People and Cow Herders

INTRODUCTION

Mark 1:17

What is discipleship, besides a buzzword in Christian circles? The word *disciple* conjures up a scene of bearded, sandaled men leaving nets and families behind to follow Jesus. The image is strange and out of the ordinary in our culture, where learning is usually confined to a classroom and textbooks. Was Jesus' call to follow Him a biblical, only-Jesus-could-pull-it-off moment? Or was it a realistic, can-happen-even-today incident?

A study of the history of discipling may surprise you. There have been masters and disciples long before the call of Jesus, long before His birth, and long before Israel was ever called to be a nation. The ancient system of schooling in the East—in countries like India and Nepal—took place in a *gurukhul*. A *gurukhul* was the home of a teacher (the guru) and his students (the *shishyas*). The study environment was based on three principles: (1) all students were the same, irrespective of social standing, age, or knowledge; and were to live in a spirit of co-dependency; (2) the teacher was to be both followed and imitated; (3) all of life's tasks had value and were to be carried out with all of oneself—even the task as mundane as taking care of cows! Belonging to a *gurukhul* was an honor; and alumni of the *gurukhul* were called *gothra*, which means "cow herders"!

A study of the history of
discipling may surprise you.

The students lived with the teacher, and in so doing, learned from the teacher. They learned of his ways, and imbibed from him knowledge in the hope of being wiser and better human beings when they left him. In imitating their leader, they became more like him. Similarly, we learn by imitation. We learn by imitating our parents early in life, and then by imitating role models. Very little in life is truly original in that sense.

The students of the *gurukhul* also supported one another. When one was weak, another stepped in strong. When one was sad, another comforted. When one was tempted, another encouraged. Similarly, it is not enough to be a student of the Bible and a follower of Jesus when we cannot extend that knowledge and relationship into all of life's relationships. As disciples, we are to be nurturers and gatherers of saints, always pointing to Christ—our Guru.

True disciples accept their calling with grace, humility, and joy. Disciples are those who do whatever they are called to do and to wear their titles with honor—even if their title is that of cow herder!

Discipleship — Telling It Like It Is

LOGOS

Matt. 4:18–22; 10:24, 25; Mark 3:13, 14; 8:34, 35

Jesus lived when stories were used very specifically. A story wasn't just something you read to put a child (or an adult) to sleep. Stories were used to derive a legal conclusion, teach a moral lesson, illustrate an idea in philosophy or in faith, or to share a wondrous event. And these stories were told in three different styles: as in a dream and as something that does not really take place in the physical world; as a real event but related as a metaphor; or as a real event but related in an exaggerated manner to emphasize certain points.

In making His call to discipleship (Luke 14:26, 27, 33), Jesus goes all out on the storytelling tactic of exaggeration and draws a mental picture of a disciple: The man is standing in the doorway of his house, a new disciple ready to embark on a journey. To publicly display his 100 percent commitment to follow this radical Man, Jesus, he's called the leaders of his community to bear witness of what he is about to do. The neighbors are there, and so is the press. This is important, because it's

big and it doesn't happen often—the man writes off his parents forever. He is now dead to them. He blesses his wife and children into a new life without him. He executes his new will and testament; he donates all his

**The neighbors are there,
and so is the press.**

things to Goodwill, except the clothes on his back and the extra set in his satchel. And then as a final salute to his calling, the man calls to his neighbors to pick up the heavy cross made especially for him and strap it to his back. That cross, he claims, will remain on his back throughout his discipling journey!

This severely exaggerated story of Jesus can scare the average Christian. It's as though Christ is calling us to be suicide bombers—forget yourself, your family, your job, your life—just strap a bomb to yourself and die for the cause, if that's what it takes! Not many of us can commit like this, so we end up feeling like we'd never live up to Jesus' expectations of a disciple and that we might as well give up right now.

What we need to remember is that Jesus was trying to make a point. He wanted there to be no doubt about the level of commitment He expects, about the magnitude of the call, and the power of the Spirit offered to each of us so we can be His disciples. Let's convert the storytelling technique of exaggeration into today's plain language to understand what Jesus was saying.

The Urgency of the Call (Matt. 4:19)

When Jesus called His disciples, there had to be something in His voice, in His body language, and in His demeanor that expressed urgency. We know this was probably true because of what the disciples did. Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. This does not mean they stopped being fishermen and husbands. There are numerous references in the Bible to their occupation and their homes after this call. They continued living like regular people and carried out their societal and family responsibilities. The key point is that the moment they said Yes to Jesus, they put Him first and everything else second.

When Jesus calls us to be disciples, the time to answer is *now*. The lifestyle of stewardship demands an immediate response.

The Prerequisite of the Call (Matt. 11:29)

When He called them to be fishers of people, Jesus had no intention of sending them in pairs at that very moment. That call was to walk with Him, learn from Him, abide in Him—until such a time came that He was ready to send them (Mark 3:13, 14).

The prerequisite then is to learn at His feet before following at His heel. When we're called to be disciples, our Creator God personally trains and equips us for the task. We need to remember that we are merely tools placed in His hands. We have nothing to fear.

The Side Effects of the Call (Mark 8:34, 35)

This is the most amazing perk of accepting the call to discipleship: When the disciples recognized the urgency of the call and made it their priority, they were immediately placed in a training program to emulate Christ. And in doing so, they experienced awesome side effects:

(a) Cross-bearing (putting Christ above self, family, job, culture, and everything) was a joyous, willing, and voluntary act; and (b) witnessing was a natural way of life!

When we are true disciples, what was once difficult is now a piece of cake. This is not because of our own strengths, but because in imitating Jesus, we become more and more like Him each day.

So what Jesus was really saying is that a life of true discipleship requires Him alone as Lord of our hearts and lives. He's not calling us to a one-time zealous act of martyrdom. He's calling us to a life-long expression and reflection of His love. The result? Everyone around us will yearn to be disciples too!

REACT

1. What are the privileges that come with being a disciple? See John 15:7–16.
2. Think of phrases that describe discipleship (e.g., growing in the image of Christ). Consider scenarios in your church where you can use these phrases to encourage Christian growth.

In Response to His Commission

TESTIMONY

Isa. 43:10

"Great multitudes followed Christ, and He welcomed with joy all who came to Him for instruction; but the Searcher of hearts knew who in the throngs that daily pressed about Him were really disposed to own Him as the promised Messiah. Many who witnessed His miracles thought that the power which could heal the sick, feed five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fishes, and raise the dead, would be a great help to them in their temporal necessities. They had followed Christ in the hope that He would be exalted to David's throne. They wanted the highest place. But Christ would not have men count upon ease and earthly advantages in connecting themselves with Him. In His lesson He taught them that self-denial and the most difficult sacrifice must be expected of all who would become His disciples. Those who engage in His service must be ready to give up their dearest friends and relatives, to be despised as fanatics and fools, and to suffer bodily harm for His name's sake. If they should become discouraged by what the world might say or do; if they should not endure the test of their love and loyalty; if they refused to keep God's command-

ments because their neighbors made sport of them, they could not perfect that faith which works by love, and purifies the soul."

Have "... I made others
happy?"

"Closely examine your own heart, and the state of your affections

toward God. Inquire, Have I devoted the precious moments of today in seeking to please myself, seeking for my own amusement? or have I made others happy? Have I helped those connected with me to greater devotion to God and to appreciate eternal things? Have I brought my religion into my home, and there revealed the grace of Christ in my words and in my deportment?"²

REACT

1. Why do we sometimes cover up the fact that God means so much to us?
2. How do you define witnessing?

1. *The Signs of the Times*, July 21, 1898.

2. *Messages to Young People*, p. 122.

Walking in His Footsteps

EVIDENCE

1 John 2:6

It all started one day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus called Andrew and his brother Peter to follow Him. Later that day, He called two others, James and his brother John. They too, without hesitation, left everything behind and answered Jesus' call for them to follow Him. Then there was Philip, Nathanael, Matthew, and the rest who formed the core team of Christ's ministry (Matt. 4:18–22; 9:9; Mark 1:16–20; John 1:43–45). These disciples learned from Jesus by walking where He walked and by sitting down with the crowds when He taught.

After His death and before His ascension to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples and all who believed Him, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20).

According to Eusebius, the father of church history, the disciples indeed did scatter to all the nations to spread the good news.¹ This was affirmed by the church historian Schumacher who recounted the places where they went and had died—Matthew to Ethiopia, Mark to Egypt, Luke and Andrew to Greece, Thomas to India, Paul and Peter to Rome, the two James to Jerusalem, Bartholomew to Asia, etc., where they all died as martyrs for their faith.²

Following Jesus can be
divided into two parts. . . .

We are Christians today because of the great commission of Christ, which has been continuously proclaimed throughout the past centuries by men and women of faith like these Twelve. Today, we too can be His disciples, His followers, when we “walk even as He walked.”

For the Christian then, discipleship means walking and following in the footsteps of Jesus. Following Jesus can be divided into two parts: (1) discovering how Jesus lived and how God wants us to live (Bible study), and (2) putting what we learn into practice (obedience).

REACT

1. What does it mean to leave everything behind to follow Jesus?
2. Why do some who profess to be believers fail to continue in their faith?

1. Grant R. Jeffrey, “The Martyrdom of the Apostles,” *The Signature of God* (Frontier Research Publications, Inc., 1996), pp. 254–257. Retrieved November 27, 2006 from <http://www.direct.ca/trinity/disciples.html>.

2. Ibid.

The Upward Trail and Climb

HOW-TO

2 Tim. 4:5

Mountains and hills were created by God for a purpose. Aside from the beauty, provisions, refuge, and protection, they also furnish an activity—either sports or recreation—to test people's strength, fortitude, capabilities, and desire to come closer to God. Mountain climbing provides an interesting object lesson for discipleship.

With both mountain climbing and discipleship, the task is not easy and poses a challenge to some and an adventure to others. The trail upward may not be safe or smooth, and hence entails risks and hardships. While it may be exhausting, reaching the summit is refreshing and victorious.

The steps on how to climb the mountain of discipleship involve five P's. The key text today enumerates the various traits of an effective disciple.

1. Pledge. You must be determined to get to the top. Full-hearted commitment and confiding everything to the Lord are needed before one embarks on discipleship endeavors (Ps. 37:5).

2. Plan. One must check the weather and do some research on the terrain.

Never climb alone.

Smart disciples study and plan the strategies they are to utilize (2 Tim. 2:15). Before sending away His disciples, Jesus revealed the character

and plan of the battle, and laid open before them the perils they would encounter.¹

3. Prepare. The foremost thing to prepare for the rigorous climb is training one's body through daily physical exercises, which build up stamina and endurance. One has to put on protective climbing gear. The preparation for discipleship is to be made day by day in treasuring the precious truths of God's Word, and through prayer, strengthening one's faith (Eph. 6:10–17).²

4. Pair with someone. Never climb alone. In 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary conquered the highest point on earth with the able help of a Sherpa climber, Norgay Tensing. Disciples need God to climb with them (Ps. 18:32, 33).

5. Persevere. A successful climber is one who presses on and reaches the top. Successful disciples are those who achieve their goals (Phil. 1:6).

REACT

Does one need to reach the pinnacle before he or she can be called a true disciple?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 197.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

Discipleship: The Key to Church Growth

OPINION

2 Tim. 2:1, 2

The cry of most every church today is the loss of members. Where are they? The answer to me seems rather simple: The more disciples, the more church members. Seems like a logical equation to me: One goes out to share the message with another—1 + 1 now equals 2. The 2 repeat the process, and 2 becomes 4. With true discipleship in the church, reaching the billions of the world is a difficult, but not impossible task.

Yet, often the church, instead of aggressively training and sending out disciples, resorts to commercial marketing strategies to build its members: free breakfast buffet for the on-timers; a mini box of chocolates for those who ask for house visitation; etc. And we, as members, tend to underestimate our testimonies by equating discipling with teaching and by convincing ourselves that we can never be disciples.

What we need to do is repaint the picture of discipleship. We need to focus less on the degrees and qualifications of the disciple and focus more on the relationship and mentoring index of the potential disciple. God calls us to share Him—not necessarily from behind a pulpit—but from within a friendship.

Like the loaves and fish, disciples need to be multiplied.

Next, we need to understand that when Jesus calls us to follow Him, He also calls us to lead. A growing church multiplies its leaders. Like the loaves and fish, disciples need to be multiplied. If Jesus wanted to be the only leader in the world of Christians, He would have seriously considered living on earth forever! Instead, He delegated the responsibility of leadership from Himself to His disciples.

Finally, discipleship is not an elective course for the Christian. Jesus doesn't say, "Come walk with Me and live with Me to see if you'd like to be My disciple." When He makes the call, He expects the commitment. Too often we don't see that being a Christian and being a disciple are the same.

It's about time that we did!

REACT

Identify elements in church activities that discourage members from participation. What can be done to change this?

Friday
January 4

“Disciples — Eternity’s Doorkeepers”

EXPLORATION

Matt. 14:18, 19

CONCLUDE

Since Jesus’ disciples learn and communicate not just the wisdom of their Teacher but the eternal life He earned for us, His disciples stand at the gates of eternity for many. His disciples must not struggle for position, or rank others according to perceived worthiness. They must continually stay in touch with their Master and with other disciples.

CONSIDER

- Drawing a “twenty-first-century disciple.” Draw or trace someone between 18–35 years of age. On either side of the figure, list qualities and abilities a modern disciple should have. Then draw lines to the appropriate places on the body. (Example: Draw a line to the hand, labeling it “Helps people in need.”)
- Using the maps in a good study Bible, or an online Web site such as <http://www.bible.ca/maps>, calculate the actual distance Jesus and His disciples covered as they traveled on their discipling missions. Using a rate of two to three miles an hour, calculate the time they spent walking.
- Gathering three or four children’s songs about soul winning (such as “I Will Make You Fishers of Men”) into a medley, lead the children in singing these songs during children’s storytime at church, or in their Sabbath School classes after telling a brief story.
- Writing a job description for a modern-day disciple, copy the format of your own job description at work, or google “writing a job description” for how-to instructions.
- Taking an “observational prayer walk” through your community, study each home carefully, and pray about what you see. For example, if there are toys outside, pray for the children.

CONNECT

John Ortberg, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat*; Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipleship*.

Maylan Schurch, Renton, Washington, U.S.A.

Discipleship: Then and Now



“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20, NIV).

Convinced Adherent . . . Then and Now

INTRODUCTION

Mark 16:20

The call to follow Christ—to be His disciple—comes in many forms. The following poem begins this week's lesson by urging us to go to rich places, poor places, and all places in between; to be quick about it, to be His disciple no matter what.

**"To all nations far and near,
then and now;
Fulfill the power of the holy
vow."**

My child, go through the dense, thriving, rich green;
Wander about the arid desert's vast room.
From the raging waters that you have been;
To the little rivers in bliss and gloom.
Set off the dark with all your sheen and height;
Run in the sun, my dear, fear not to fly.
Even in depths, embrace heaven's delight;
If tears and pain are here, for Him just cry!

Run off to heed the awe that heavens adore.
Go out and preach teachings to brace the band
To man and God betwixt and true galore;
Lovely, mighty, take it by heart and hand.

To all nations far and near, then and now;
Fulfill the power of the holy vow.

Of Dogs and Sticks

EVIDENCE

1 Pet. 1:2

A disciple is a “person who learns from another, especially one who then teaches others”; a disciple is an “active follower or adherent of someone, or some philosophy.”¹ With reference to Christianity, “the disciples were the students of Jesus during His ministry.”²

The following story focuses on obedience, and illustrates the depth of what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus:

“John sat in a park one day and watched a man training his dog.

“The man would throw a stick and the dog would go fetch it and bring it back. As John watched he saw that the dog did not immediately run after the stick but instead waited for the master to say ‘go’ at which he would almost fly after it.

“‘Oh Lord,’ said John, ‘I wish I had obedience like that.’

“Then the guy threw the stick and turned to the dog, who was eager to go, and said ‘stay!’

The dog was straining every sinew and muscle in his body to go get that stick but he stayed by his master waiting for what seemed an eternity.

“‘Oh Lord,’ said John, ‘to have THAT sort of obedience.’

“The dog waited and waited eagerly awaiting the ‘g’ of ‘go’ but until it came he would not move. Then the master finally said, ‘Come on boy, let’s go home’ and walked away from the stick.

“The dog, without a second glance at the stick, turned and trotted alongside his master, eyes fixed on him, as if he had completely forgotten the stick even existed.

“‘Learning anything?’ came a voice in John’s heart.”³

To remain a true disciple of Jesus, we must keep our gaze fixed on Him and not on the “sticks” in our lives. Only then will we be able to completely follow Him—no matter where He leads.

The dog waited and waited.

1. Wiktionary. “Disciple.” Retrieved October 26, 2006 from <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disciple>.

2. Wikipedia. “Disciple (Christianity).” Retrieved October 26, 2006 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciple_%28Christianity%29.

3. Crimperman.org. “Lord, give me obedience like that.” Retrieved October 26, 2006 from <http://www.crimperman.org/writing/obey.html>.

Monday
January 7

Called to His Purpose

LOGOS

Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Mark 16:20; John 3:22–31; Acts 5:34–39

The Perfect Example (John 3:21; Matt. 4:19, 23, 25)

The example Jesus set is astounding. From 12 men, the world now looks at the fastest growing, life-changing discipleship pattern history has ever recorded. His method of instruction was simple: "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people" (Matt. 4:19, NRSV).

Jesus never used theological jargon or intellectual paradigms. He used unpretentious acts and conveyed simple, yet meaningful thoughts. Jesus knew that a spotless labor of compassion would break the ice. Therefore, He taught, preached, and healed—and the people followed Him.

The Object of His Ministry (Isa. 42:6, 7; Matt. 24:14)

Why were the disciples chosen in the first place? Clearly, Jesus called them from all walks of life, into righteousness, to be a light to the Gentile nation—to open blind eyes, to heal wounded hearts, and to free imprisoned souls. He called those who sat in darkness into the Father's radiant presence. They preached the good news of the kingdom as a testimony that they knew Him closely (Matt. 24:14).

**Their crumbling inabilities
soon became towers of
assurance.**

Christ's life mirrored a close relationship with His heavenly Father. He wanted the disciples to have the same type of relationship with God. Even though His corporeal body is no longer present, it is not impossible to help others see glimpses of Him. Because we are His disciples, they will see His image in us.

His Channels of Truth (Mark 16:20; John 3:22–31; Acts 5:34–39)

John the Baptist considered himself a disciple of Jesus. He preached of the Messiah even before Christ's ministry began, and he testified of the One who is from above and who is above all (John 3:31). Such submissiveness to the Master is a characteristic of a true disciple.

The disciples spent only three and a half years with Jesus and had a hard time understanding concepts such as submissiveness and trust. But we know that the constant companionship they shared with Him was essential in order for them to alter the course of history by establishing the Christian church. They saw Him eat

with corrupt officials, sleep while a storm raged, heal outcasts, bring to life a three-day old corpse, and forgive a participant of immorality—all the while telling them that His cup was not what they thought it was. They may not have understood everything at first, but they sought to learn more of Him day by day.

When He ascended to heaven, Jesus promised that He would send the disciples the Holy Spirit to help them continue witnessing in His name. Their crumbling inabilities soon became towers of assurance. “Zeal for God and His cause moved the disciples to bear witness to the gospel with mighty power.”¹

A Promise (Matt. 28:19, 20)

Our sacred charge as Christ’s disciples is to bring the good news of salvation wherever we go. When the joy of our assured salvation abounds in our hearts, this command ceases to be a burden and becomes instead a promise we claim. If we consider discipleship as a path that leads us to God, then we realize that He has provided us with the power to overcome our weaknesses.

Discipleship . . . Now (Matt. 24:14; John 8:31)

In John 8:31, we hear Jesus’ words, “ ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples’ ” (NIV). But being His disciples means far more than being a church member. Discipleship has more to do with doing God’s will. Discipleship means we strive to show in our lives the redeeming love Christ has shown us.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, we find that God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (NRSV). The call to be His followers is still the same. His promise is still the same. Will our response be the same as the disciples’?

“There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour’s love. All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.”²

REACT

1. Why is it impossible to profess being a Christian without being a true disciple?
2. In what ways can you show that you are a disciple of Christ?

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.

2. *Ibid.*

Tuesday
January 8

Go Tell the World

TESTIMONY

Mark 16:20

"The commission given to the disciples is given also to us. Today, as then, a crucified and risen Saviour is to be uplifted before those who are without God and without hope in the world. The Lord calls for pastors, teachers, and evangelists. From door to door His servants are to proclaim the message of salvation. To every nation, kindred, tongue, and people the tidings of pardon through Christ are to be carried. Not with tame, lifeless utterances is the message to be given, but with clear, decided, stirring utterances. Hundreds are waiting for the warning to escape for their lives. The world needs to see in Christians an evidence of the power of Christianity. Not merely in a few places, but throughout the world, messages of mercy are needed."¹

"Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight 'against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Ephesians 6:12. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade

I will be with you always.

them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the General of the armies of heaven. He made full provision for the prosecution of their work and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that My presence will be with you even there. Labor in faith and confidence; for the time will never come when I will forsake you. I will be with you always, helping you to perform your duty, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, sustaining you, giving you success in speaking words that shall draw the attention of others to heaven."²

REACT

1. How is sharing the gospel different today than when Jesus' disciples worked to fulfill the gospel commission?

2. What advantages might we have that Jesus' disciples did not?

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 29.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29.

How to Be an Old-Fashioned Disciple

HOW-TO

Matt. 17:20

The word *disciple* might seem a little old-fashioned today—some might even say it's uncool. But if we look back to the faith of the early disciples, we'll surely find that they had something special going for them—something that the Lord Himself invites us to partake of. By meditating on the life of Jesus and the disciples, here are some observations we can make on how to experience the fullness of being Christ's disciples.

1. Submission. People remember how Jesus fed thousands, turned water into wine, raised the dead, and performed countless other miracles. But they often gloss over the fact that these acts were possible because He submitted to the Father every single moment of His life.

Those three years Christ took to change the world were based upon thirty years of whole-hearted devotion to His Father—our Father! This involves forsaking ourselves that He may be our all in all.

2. Discipline. Disciple. Discipline. Get it? You can never be a good disciple unless you practice your Master's teaching and get with His training program. What training program? The spiritual training that is specifically designed to strengthen and tone our spiritual muscles.

Disciple. Discipline. Get it?

If you don't train, your spiritual muscles will become flabby and weak. So pray, read His Word and meditate upon it, and experience Christ so the Holy Spirit protein will build your spiritual muscles rock hard!

3. Experience. Live out your belief in Christ. Jesus said that His disciples could expel demons, raise the dead, and perform miracles if they only would have faith. We are to have such faith also. While a professional career in raising the dead isn't exactly what we're talking about, Jesus nonetheless invites us to experience an active Christianity that experiences firsthand the power of prayer and faith. Watch God destroy sin, break down barriers of hatred, show His transforming power, and perform miracles with that seed of faith He plants within you. You can't begin to imagine how exciting and powerful an active Christian life can be!

4. Reflect. Let others see Christ in you. Thankfully, as His disciples, we do not need to create any light of our own. All we have to do is be a faithful reflection of His image—something possible only if we spend time with Him and are constantly being changed in His image. In the darkness around us, let His light pierce the void and brighten the room. No matter how small a lamp we may be, His light is sufficient to banish the night forever.

Thursday
January 10

Go, Teach, Baptize

OPINION

Matt. 28:19, 20

The command God extends to us as disciples is clear and detailed. It's so definite that we can't ask what, so individual that we can't ask who, so particular that we can't ask how, so explicit that we can't ask where.

Now, should we ask when? The answer echoing through generations is *now*. But then, some people's *now* is punctuated by a stuck period or a tarrying comma rather than an on-the-move exclamation point. Worse still, some people's *now* is tailed by a question mark.

A bigger question than *when* is *why*. When we observe life in the church today, we see people who reach out to others and exercise discipleship. But do they know why they even do that? Could it be that their enthusiasm is so misplaced and out of sync with the essence of the discipleship call?

If we are Jesus' disciples, then we clearly should know why we follow His teachings. Otherwise, we really are not committed to the Great Commission. If we naturally hate to be blind followers in any earthly undertaking, then why should we pose as happy yet sightless followers of Jesus? To do so is hypocrisy. And we know that Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees for that very thing.

A bigger question than
when is *why*.

Really, why do we *go*? Probably because we want to be in a place, and we can't stop our feet from marching toward that direction. Why do we *teach*? Maybe because we want to review what we know until the knowledge becomes forever retained in our memory. Why do we *baptize*? Possibly because it equally strengthens and renews us. We, too, feel the need to be born again in Jesus, and therefore strive to achieve that renewed personhood. Truly, the disciple's task is our way of preparing ourselves and others for Jesus' return. And it's a happy occupation, because as we do our task, God is with us always, even unto the end of the world.

REACT

Is it wrong to make it a priority to improve self whenever one executes the Matthew 28:19, 20 command? Explain.

Your Mission, Should You Accept It . . .

Friday
January 11

EXPLORATION

John 17:15–18; Heb. 13:1

CONCLUDE

Knowing that God sends those who follow Jesus is one thing. Actually going to the world and telling of God's love is quite another. The challenge for people who are serious about their Christian faith is finding ways of going and telling. It begins not by thinking about "the world" but by looking for opportunities in "your world." The encouraging thing for Christians about going into the world is knowing that Jesus is already there. Being sent into the world and following Jesus into the world are really different ways of talking about the same thing.

CONSIDER

- Brainstorming words relating to discipleship. Which combination of words best describes what being a follower of Jesus means to you?
- Joining a community arts or sporting group that is outside your usual circle of association. How will you be Christ to the people you meet there?
- Designing a desktop background for your computer with visual or written cues that will help you to be a better disciple. Send it to your contacts or make it available for download through your church Web site.
- Reading John 4, then going somewhere that you can meet new people. Pray that God will lead you to people with whom you can share.
- Starting a ministry specifically to meet the needs of your community.
- Cooking something special to take to a neighbor you don't know. Step into their world for a while. Invite them into yours.
- Signing up to participate in an overseas evangelism trip.
- Undertaking a demographic study of where you live. Work with your church to make a plan for going and telling.

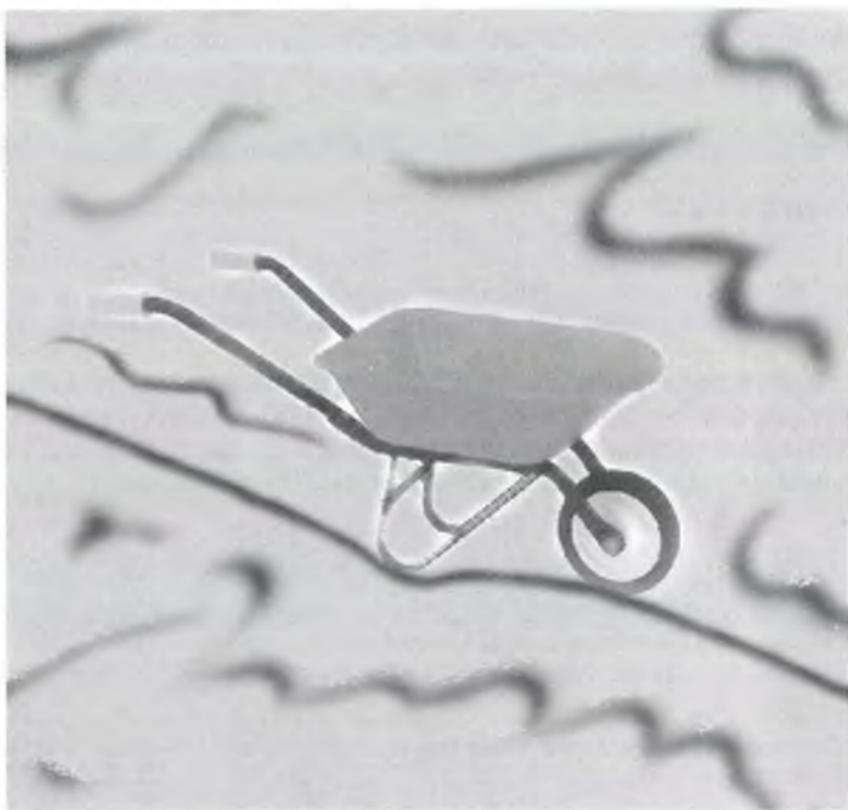
CONNECT

First Corinthians 1–4; 9.

Bill Hybels and Mark Mittleberg, *Becoming A Contagious Christian*; M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*.

Lesson 3
January 12–19

Called to Discipleship by Jesus



“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1, NIV).

Are You a Wheelbarrow Disciple?

INTRODUCTION

Luke 5:1-11

A tight-rope walker is capable of wheeling a person in a wheelbarrow on a rope strung over a thundering waterfall such as Victoria Falls. However, to get a volunteer to ride in the wheelbarrow is another thing. Is Jesus' call to give up your current lifestyle and follow Him similar to asking a volunteer to climb into that wheelbarrow?

Yet surprisingly, one Man trodding on the shores of the Sea of Galilee managed to convince busy fishermen to stop fishing and become fishers of men!

A disciple is a convinced follower of a school of thought or of an individual teacher. In other words, a disciple is an apostle. The Greek *apostolos* means one who is sent forth, or an ambassador or a messenger. In Koine Greek, the Greek in which the New Testament was written, the word *apostolos* is used for two general applications. The first application referred to a ship that was sent out, a cargo that was dispatched, or the documents that represent a ship and its cargo. The second application referred to people who acted as ambassadors, envoys, or delegates.*

As a little girl and her father were visiting St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England, they gazed at the beautiful painting there titled *The Light of the World* in which Jesus is holding a lantern in one hand, while knocking on the door of a cottage with His other hand. The little girl asked, "Daddy, did they ever let Him in?"

"Daddy, did they ever let
Him in?"

Since the call of those first 12 disciples, the gospel has spread to far-flung areas. Jesus now has millions of disciples who still sail across oceans to bring good tidings to the weary in heart or who witness to neighbors across the garden fence.

Most of the early disciples (or apostles) were either crucified like Jesus, or burned, or stoned to death. Yet their blood was like the small seed of a tree that produces a tall giant. Satan's dirty tricks shall not prevent the true followers of Jesus from being like merchant ships, bringing the good news to people in sin and the hope of light to those in darkness.

As you study this week, ask yourself: Am I as reluctant to heed Jesus' call to discipleship as I would be to get into the wheelbarrow of a tight-rope walker? How would I answer the little girl's question?

*The SDA Bible Dictionary (1979, Rev. ed.), p. 63.

Sunday
January 13

The Sacred Romance of Discipleship

LOGOS

Matt. 4:18–22; 9:9; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11; John 1:35–39

As a 36-year-old, fatherless “man,” I seemed to be standing at the junction of two roads. One of the roads quickly disappeared into the forests of the mountains towering over the valley floor. The weather gathering over the canyon in that direction promised torrential rain, and, further up, treacherous ice and snow.

The other road stretched out for miles. I knew that road well, as I had been on it for years. I could see that traveling down that road would result in fatherly men entering my life momentarily to speak a word of encouragement, maybe even to give a bit of advice. I looked again toward the uncertain mountain trail. All I've ever wanted was something constant and enduring—a father, a real man, who would guide and initiate me. Suddenly I heard a voice coming from beyond the bend. “I can be your Father.” It was Jesus speaking—the only Man down that road. I hesitated, then I blurted out, “But you're not real!” Quietly He responded, “But I can be!”

“In all of our hearts lies a longing for a Sacred Romance.”

The Evidence—Before the Journey of Discipleship Begins (John 1:35–39)

What do we really want? What are we hoping to find through all of our posing—all of our addictions, perfectionism, and rebellion? In those rare moments when the effects of our drugs, our activities, and our attitudes have worn off, why do we hear that haunting voice reminding us, “You're still empty.”

“In all of our hearts lies a longing for a Sacred Romance.”* Discipleship is the journey of following that longing. It comes to us when Jesus Christ presents Himself as the One we need. This is the opportunity for our hearts to be awakened. This is the moment we are presented with the fact that in all our longings for life, we have really been seeking Jesus Christ. This is the moment when the spark of light, implanted in every human soul, is introduced to the Source of that light (John 1:9). This is the moment of invitation to seek more.

It is God's passion for a romance with us that initiates the opportunity for discipleship. Our personal journey of discipleship begins when we respond to that invitation by seeking more.

When Jesus noticed Andrew and John following Him, He targeted their hearts with the question, “What do you seek?” (John 1:38, NKJV) Christ wanted to draw

out of them the search for life. He wanted them to go deeper in their journey.

Andrew and John's answer, " 'Where are You staying?' " (verse 38, NKJV) revealed their desire for a more intimate dialogue with Jesus. A few moments with Him simply weren't enough. Passing Him on the street was insufficient. Brushing against Him in church didn't cut it. They were moved with a sudden and very real desire to spend deep time with Him.

The Call to the Journey of Discipleship (Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11)

Christ chose to invite the fishermen to follow Him. Discipleship begins with a choice—not on our part, but on the part of God (John 15:16). God has chosen us as disciples because of His love for us, because of our intrinsic value to His heart. He chooses us because He is looking for intimate friends.

When presented with this invitation, the fishermen immediately followed Him. This illustrates the power of the call to discipleship. It was so strong; it spoke so deeply to their needs that they left everything.

The Essence of the Call (Matt. 9:9)

Jesus invited Matthew to " 'Follow Me' " (Matt. 9:9, NKJV). Discipleship is about Jesus. He's real, He's present. He's where we can know Him. We can see what He's doing; we can see where He's going. And we know just what we need to do to keep up with Him. This is what makes Jesus' call to discipleship so powerful. Intimate association with Jesus Christ means real life—abundant, free, and satisfying. Discipleship means there's only one road to take.

REACT

1. Recall a time when you became painfully aware of the emptiness in your life. Did you understand it as a call to something richer and deeper? Why or why not?
2. Is intimate association with Jesus Christ your primary passion in life? If not, what is competing for that position?

*Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, *The Sacred Romance* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), p. 19.

Monday
January 14

Discipleship as Self-Denial

TESTIMONY

Matt. 4:18

“What occasion for rejoicing had the disciples who were privileged to walk and talk with the Majesty of heaven! This was not a time for them to mourn and fast. They must open their hearts to receive the light of His glory, that they might shed light upon those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.”¹

“When Jesus bade Peter and his companions follow Him, immediately they left their boats and nets. Some of these disciples had friends dependent on them for support; but when they received the Savior’s invitation, they did not hesitate, and inquire, How shall I live, and sustain my family? They were obedient to the call; and when afterward Jesus asked them, ‘When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?’ they could answer, ‘Nothing.’ Luke 22:35.”²

“Your part is to put your will on the side of Christ. When you yield your will to His, He immediately takes possession of you, and works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Your nature is brought under the control of His Spirit. Even your

thoughts are subject to Him. If you cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire, you can control the will, and thus an entire change will be wrought in your life.”³

**“Your part is to put your will
on the side of Christ.”**

REACT

1. Once you realize what a great part you personally play in accepting Christ’s call to discipleship, what should you do in order to become one of His disciples?

2. Jesus’ first disciples were just like us. They earned a living and had commitments the same as we do. But when Jesus called them, they didn’t hesitate to follow. Why do you think they were so eager to accept His invitation?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 277.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

3. *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 209.

The Ideal Candidate

EVIDENCE

Matt. 9:10–13; 19:23, 24, 29, 30; Luke 5:1–11; 2 Cor. 4:7

Have you ever been the last kid chosen at recess?

I wonder if that's how many of the disciples felt before Jesus came into their lives. After all, Jesus' first disciple recruits included fishermen and a tax collector—both professions that weren't very high on their society's ladder of status.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus didn't recruit scriptural scholars or young priests-in-training to become His protégés? Why did He target in His search candidates with little or no religious training or formal education? After all, these interns were to lay the foundation for His church and to set the spark for His message to travel around the world. Luke 5 even alludes to the fact that some of the disciples weren't very successful in their chosen trade as fishermen. Shouldn't Jesus have focused on finding the highest qualified or most-talented candidates available?

I think Jesus answers that question in Matthew 9:12, 13: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. . . . For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (NIV).

Not only did Jesus socialize with sinners (see Matthew 9:10, 11), He searched for them, targeted them, recruited them, and entrusted them to be His disciples and to lead His people.

Jesus' first 12 disciples were sinners just like you and me.

Why? I believe the answer is revealed in 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (NIV).

Jesus' first 12 disciples were sinners just like you and me. But Jesus knew they were the ideal type of candidate—they were imperfect, and they were humble. It was only through His teaching and the guidance of the Holy Spirit that these 12 men were able to accomplish what God had laid out for them. Jesus knew this was a prime example for you, me, and the billions of sinners to follow.

As modern-day disciples of Christ, we also must lean on Jesus' power and understanding to accomplish His plans for our lives. It is never through our intelligence, religious understanding, formal education, or physical prowess that we succeed. It is only by serving as weak and empty "jars of clay" that God is able to work through us.

You see, sometimes those who would be chosen last really are the best candidates for the job (Matt. 19:29, 30).

The Least of These

HOW-TO

Matt. 25:31–46

The story is told of a rich, lonely man who prays to see God. Then he has a dream telling him that God will visit him the next day. So he cleans his house and waits patiently. But rather than God coming, three people in distress come. He helps them, but goes to bed disappointed because God never came. Then, he receives another dream in which the Lord explains, “ ‘ Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of My family, you did it to Me. ’ ”

This story helps us understand Matthew 25:31–40. Here’s how. A call to discipleship is a call to change our perceptions. As we study the calls of the disciples, we see them *doing*—they put down their nets, left the tax collector’s table, and followed Jesus. However, many of them did not take the time to understand the “renewing of the mind” that was required of them (Rom. 12:1; Titus 3:5). (In fact, they did not truly change until after Jesus died.) So He told them the parables in Matthew 25 as practical illustrations of not just the doing, but of the change in

thinking that accompanies the call to discipleship.

A call to discipleship is a call to change our perceptions.

Even today there are many people perceived as “the least” for whatever reason is in vogue. But how are we required to minister to them? As

if we are ministering to Him! How can we take that first step out of our comfort zones to answer the call of Christ in not just the doing, but also in the renewing? Here are two ways:

1. Titus 3:5 tells us that this renewal can occur only through the work of the Holy Spirit. So pray daily for His indwelling.
2. Receive support from others and give support in return. We were never meant to live and work in a vacuum. There is truly strength in numbers.

REACT

1. What groups are considered “the least” in your community, and what opportunities do you have as individuals and as a CQ class to serve these people?
2. Plan a service project that your class can do for one of “the least” in your community. Begin with earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit to allow you to see that group or individual as God perceives them. See how the quality of your work changes with prayer and the perception that you are doing it to God Himself.

Followers of Doom

OPINION

1 Cor. 1:22–24

On March 20, 2000, as reported by Reuters, Joseph Kibwetere, a 68-year-old self-styled bishop Ugandan politician, led his disciples to a grisly mass death apparently because he believed the world was about to be destroyed for not obeying the Ten Commandments.

As a leader of the “Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God,” he told his followers that in March of 2000, the world would end. He told them to live strictly by the commandments and communicate with each other only in gestures.

Cult members started making their way to the cult’s compound several days before March 20. Only those who were in the church were supposed to be saved. There they sang and chanted for several hours . . . and set the building on fire.

Speaking of the Bible disciples, Paul says, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. . . . Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph. 6: 11, 14–18, NIV). This is a vivid picture of what disciples of Jesus are and what they will do as the cosmic battle between evil and good closes. His disciples will not lead others blindly; but through the power of the Holy Spirit, they will lead with prayer and with God’s grace and righteousness to spread the three angels’ messages (Rev. 14:6–13).

There they sang and chanted
for several hours . . . and set
the building on fire.

REACT

1. Why does the Bible warn us against following self-proclaimed christis?
2. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, what role should you play in proclaiming the Second Coming amidst prophets and followers of doom?

Answering the Call to Discipleship

EXPLORATION

Jer. 29:11

CONCLUDE

What has Jesus called you to do as His disciple? Maybe He has called you to teach or to preach; to be a plumber, a secretary, a student, a computer guru, a mother, a dad, a social worker, a carpenter, a police officer, or an accountant. The important point is that He has called *you* to be His disciple—regardless of what else He has given you to do. Be prepared by seeking His agenda at the beginning of the day. In the evening thank Him for how He has used you. Disciples follow the Master's plan.

CONSIDER

- Researching the order that the disciples joined Jesus. Which ones did He call? Which ones did someone else lead to Jesus? Who volunteered?
- Thinking of someone you can invite to attend a special program at church. Make it a special outing by inviting them out to eat before the program. Be sure there are no "hooks" attached to the invitation.
- Reflecting on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. How can you apply this to your life on a daily basis?
- Walking around the area where you live or where your church is. Observe the existing conditions. Is there anything you can do to help someone?
- Sharing with someone who is experiencing some kind of loss a CD or DVD that has touched your heart or given you hope.
- Searching the Internet news for someone who has done an act of kindness and e-mail or write them a note of encouragement. Do not identify yourself.
- Smiling and thanking the clerks who wait on you on your next visit to a mall—telling them how much you appreciate what they are doing.

CONNECT

Read and reflect on Luke 9:2–6 and 12:2–10.

Steps to Christ, "The Work and the Life."

Joel Olsteen, *Your Best Life Now*, part 6, "Live to Give."

Lessons From Would-Be Disciples



“Another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God’ ” (Luke 9:61, 62, NRSV).

“Follow Me”

INTRODUCTION

Luke 9:23

I've always wanted to be one of Jesus' disciples and have the experience of living with the Messiah. I've also wanted to be His disciple because I think it would be great to hear the voice of Jesus, walk the same paths He walked, and see His miracles happening in front of me. What an amazing experience it must have been to witness the power of God that way!

But then I think about what Jesus said in Luke 9:23—“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (NRSV).

This verse helps me to realize that being a disciple means more than just being a spectator. Being a disciple wasn't about cheering Jesus on when He needed encouragement. The disciples were His followers. When Jesus called the Twelve, He mostly used two words: “Follow Me.” Only those people who were ready to do exactly that were called disciples. They were called disciples not only because they

But then I think about what Jesus said in Luke 9:23. . . .

were seers of the Word of God, but because they also were doers of the Word. And once you understand the real meaning of being a disciple, then you see that there weren't just twelve disciples, but there were

other people who were willing to follow what the Good Master said—people who were willing to leave everything that took their eyes from heaven—people who were willing to face any struggle—people who were willing to be born again and to follow Him. And when you get the whole picture, you realize that we can all be called disciples.

In the Bible, there are many instances where you can see people who thought they wanted to be one of Jesus' disciples, but who could not make such a huge commitment. In our current society, there are a lot of people who are living the life of a true disciple. But we look at them and think that they must not belong to Jesus. I assure you that from the beginning, Jesus wanted all of us to be His disciples, not because it's a nice title for Christians, but because He wants us to take Christianity to another level. If you've always wanted to be a disciple, don't stop dreaming, because that's the same dream Jesus had for all of us when He said: “Follow Me.”

A Would-Be That Came to Be

EVIDENCE

John 3:1-21

Nicodemus wanted to unravel the mystery of conversion. He approached Jesus to discuss the formula that has to be followed. But Jesus spoke about the "wind" and "being born again." These concepts were metaphors concerning the mysterious experience of conversion. Conversion evades empirical explanation and is beyond any formula. Anyone who tries to understand conversion must recognize that conversion is meant to be experienced more than it is to be defined.

We do not know what ultimately happened to any of the "would-be" disciples we will study about later this week, except for Nicodemus. There is evidence of his conversion in some early traditions. In the second century, there was an apocryphal gospel entitled the "Gospel of Nicodemus." Also, next to Jesus' tomb, there is one of the typical first-century *kokh* tombs that has been associated with Nicodemus.* This evidence does not come from the apostles, but is an early tradition that recognizes Nicodemus's conversion.

How did Nicodemus become a disciple? His conversion was a completely different experience than most of Jesus' disciples.

He remained in the back-
ground.

Rather than literally walking with Him as the twelve disciples did, he remained in the background, defending Jesus as he did so. John 7:50, 51, tells us that during the Feast of the Tabernacles, Nicodemus questioned the Pharisees' reaction regarding Jesus. Later, in John 19:39, we read that Nicodemus assisted Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial. Surely it would seem that Jesus' conversation with him about the Cross softened his heart, so that later, he would become an integral member of those who believed that Jesus truly was the Savior. Nicodemus was a would-be who truly came to be.

REACT

Have you been trying to understand how to become a disciple instead of having the experience of actually being one? If so, what can you do to change your situation?

* Dan Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulcher Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* (May/June 1986): 26-45.

LOGOS

Matt. 8:19–22; 19:16–26; Mark 10:17–23; Luke 4:16–30; 18:18–30; John 3:1–21

A Matter of Commitment (Matt. 8:19–22)

The concept of discipleship was quite common in Jewish culture. Rabbis usually had followers or disciples that would seek to be schooled by these religious figures. When it came to Jesus, the concept of discipleship was reconceived altogether. Jesus Himself was not ordinary. The disciple candidates did not have the elite qualifications expected, and the methodology of this apprenticeship was far more rigorous than ever seen before.

The reason why the two individuals we find interacting with Jesus in Matthew 8:19–22 are not named is most likely because they belonged to a crowd of “would-be disciples” who followed Christ when they were able to do so. Every time we come upon the story of a “would-be disciple,” we witness the struggle between what a person says they are willing to offer, and how much Jesus is able to discern that their heart is actually willing to give.

**Jesus taught His followers to
... tend to those who are
ignored.**

Matthew 8:19–22 clarifies what it really means to follow a self-sacrificing teacher: to be willing to partake of the same humble service on

behalf of others, while not seeking comfort or glory for ourselves. Next, we are shown what level of commitment we should invest in a discipleship experience: Enough to consider every matter of our life second to the mission at hand.

A Matter of Life or Death (Matt. 19:16–26)

A disciple of Jesus is not merely someone who believes Jesus is real, or who regularly attends church activities. Becoming baptized doesn't make a person a disciple, nor does tithing or simply being good. These things are important, but Jesus gives us a higher criterion for what it means to be His disciple. In Mark 8:34–36, He says that disciples deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him, giving their life to Him and the gospel. To grow as a disciple requires a willing and teachable heart, not to mention a radical commitment to obey Jesus.*

In other words, we die to self, and are born again in Christ.

A Matter of Vision (Luke 4:16–30)

In Luke 4:16–30, Jesus lays out the essence of His mission and what would also become the foundation of all Christian service. He established a movement of freedom, service unto others, and the proclamation of the Lord's favor (verse 19). In this sense, a "would-be disciple" must be continually filled with the same passion and vision as Jesus was filled with during His earthly ministry.

Jesus taught His followers to notice those people who are unnoticed and to tend to those who are ignored. While the inclination of the most fortunate might be to consume the very same things they can offer, Jesus teaches us to go without, if necessary, in order to provide for the less fortunate. Therefore, the basis of His vision is to give selflessly, regardless of the cost.

A Matter of Salvation (John 3:1–21)

Among the many lessons Jesus shared with Nicodemus during their private meeting, two seem to stand out:

1. Becoming a true disciple of Jesus ultimately requires the "would-be disciple" to be born again. Simply stated, we cannot comply with the standards of Christian discipleship unless we become new creatures through the new birth. This occurs by surrendering to the influence of God's Holy Spirit.

2. The second lesson of great importance Jesus conveys to Nicodemus is that being born again is necessary if we want to see the kingdom of heaven. One must conclude that our salvation experience is directly related to our discipleship experience. The experience of salvation can then be found parallel to the discipleship journey in which we participate with Christ.

From this perspective, we can understand why Jesus calls us to share our discipleship experience with others. He knows that as we reach "would-be disciples," and that as they experience their own relationship with the Teacher-Master, we are in fact reaching them for the kingdom of heaven. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, NIV).

REACT

1. How does the biblical concept of discipleship differ from the common apprenticeship or internship experiences in today's society?

2. If our outreach efforts were focused on making new disciples instead of filling pews, what different dynamics would our efforts generate?

*David Buehring, *A Discipleship Journey* (Nashville, Tenn.: Ocean Hill Communications, 2004), p. 23.

Tuesday
January 22

The Badge of Love

TESTIMONY

Matt. 19:16–22

“If your hearts have been given to selfishness, let Christ imbue you with his love. He desires that we shall love him fully, and encourages, yes, even commands, that we shall love others as he has given us an example. He has made love the badge of our discipleship. He says, ‘A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ This is the measurement to which you are to reach,—‘Love one another; as I have loved you.’ What height, what depth and breadth, of love! This love is not simply to embrace a few favorites, it is to reach to the lowliest and humblest of God’s creatures. Jesus says, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’”¹

“When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, ‘I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.’ Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of

“. . . [Let] Christ imbue you
with his love.”

discipleship.”²

God doesn’t need our money or possessions in order to make us His disciples. When He asked the rich young ruler to give up all he had, He sought to discover his true motivation. We shouldn’t worry about how much we need to give. Rather, we need to ensure that we are giving ourselves. Love toward God and our neighbor are the biggest proof of our discipleship, and it is what will make a difference in our answer to His call.

REACT

Compare the stories of the poor widow who gave everything and the rich young ruler. What role did love play in their approach to God?

1. *The Youth Instructor*, October 20, 1892.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 60.

Nothing Less Than Yourself

HOW-TO

Luke 18:18–30

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is a radical decision. God is not looking for just piety and good works. He is looking for your heart. There is a difference between an outward disciple and a disciple from the heart. Jesus wants to know if you can really trust Him with yourself—the good and the dark of your life. Here are four ways to develop authenticity with God.

1. Relationship versus religious actions. Focus always on Jesus. Often we focus on our actions and feel like a failure when they are not congruent with Christian values. Other times, we are just empty vessels committed to good deeds done out of duty or habit. But let's remember that it isn't about what we can do for Jesus but what Jesus can do through us when we become His instrument. This happens only within the context of a relationship with Him.

2. Authenticity versus appearance. To remain authentic, we need to go to the Source. Our battle is not against our sin, bad habits, or character. Our battle is the battle of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). In other words, stay connected to God through the Word, prayer, and outreach.

2. Spirituality versus religiosity. Ezekiel 36:26 says, "I will give you a new heart . . . I will remove from you your heart of stone" (NIV). The prophet invites us to give to Jesus our heart. Only after we have done that can we be truly obedient. Obedience without giving Him our heart is legalism. God wants more. Asking for your heart is asking for your entire self.

God . . . is looking for your
heart.

3. Jesus versus yourself. There is a difference between what you want to give to Jesus and what He is asking you to give. Pay attention to your dreams, motives, and life decisions. You will recognize, through prayer, the difference between your self-centeredness and God's will.

REACT

1. Why does Jesus ask you for a radical commitment; and why is it so hard to make that commitment?

2. Try to identify in your Christian experience what is spiritually authentic and what is legalism.

Thursday
January 24

Counting the Cost: The Price of Discipleship

OPINION

Luke 18:18-30

Discipleship requires a free fall into the arms of grace. Christ made it clear that it would be difficult for a rich person to make it to heaven (Luke 18:24-30). In light of that, should we skirt around financial success? How much or how little should we acquire? What is the cost of heaven? Jesus gave the rich young ruler the key to eternal life. We can break it down into three parts:

1. Keep the commandments. Obedience is an important part of our relationship with Christ. Obeying is the ultimate expression of our love for Him (John 14:15).

2. Commit all of you and all you have. Jesus can use our resources for His kingdom if we loosen our grip and submit all we are and own to Him.

3. "Follow Me." This is the simplest part of Jesus' command, yet it might be the most difficult to stick with. Following Him requires a constant partnership with Him. The struggle for our souls is such that Satan won't let us commit to Jesus without enticing us to give priority to anything else we might consider worthy.

"If your thoughts, your plans, your purposes, are all directed toward the accu-

mulation of the things of earth, your anxiety, your study, your interests, will all be centered upon the world.

What is the cost of heaven?

... You will have no time to devote to the study of the Scriptures and to earnest prayer that you may escape the snares of Satan, and render intelligent obedience to your Heavenly Father."*

So you see, it's not so much what you own, but what owns you that will determine whether you will see Jesus face to face. Where is your treasure? Let it be hidden at the foot of the cross. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21, NIV).

REACT

1. How can you stay centered in Christ while pursuing success?
2. How does stripping away your material possessions improve your spiritual life?

*"The Treasure and the Heart," *The Review and Herald*, September 1, 1910.

Reticent or Intrepid Followers?

Friday
January 25

EXPLORATION

Jonah 1:1–3; Mark 8:34, 35; Luke 14:28; Heb. 11:8

CONCLUDE

Sometimes the gap between knowing what God wants of us and actually acting on it can be more like a chasm. In taking that leap from faith into action we may need to overcome fear of the unknown, fear of failure, and fear of personal cost. Perhaps we have sought to make Christianity so accessible and palatable that we no longer understand or accept the demanding and rigorous discipline of the Christian life. We need only consider some of the hard sayings of Jesus to be challenged! In fact Jesus recommends that we “count the cost” before signing up. Yet as Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it in *The Cost of Discipleship*: “The disciple is dragged out of his relative security into a life of absolute insecurity—that is, in truth, into the absolute security and safety of the fellowship of Jesus.” Don’t go kicking and screaming, take the leap of faith.

CONSIDER

- Labeling a number of weighted objects to represent the personal price of following Jesus. Using a set of scales or balances—count the cost.
- Becoming a mentor to a young person in your church or community.
- Writing your own personal mission statement. How does it relate to Jesus’ mission in Luke 4:6–13?
- Constructing, carving, or decorating a cross to serve as a visual reminder to “take up your cross” each day.
- Taking a series of photographs which capture what it means for you to be a disciple.
- Writing a poem about the cost of discipleship.
- Ranking some of the costs associated with following Jesus.

CONNECT

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*
Craig Croeschel, *Chazown*. www.chazown.com.
www.mentor121.net.

Gender and Discipleship



**“Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word’ ”
(Luke 1:38, NRSV).**

Women Disciples: Emergency Use Only?

INTRODUCTION

Judges 4; 5; Romans 16

Some say God uses women only when no men are around. Others believe women aren't meant to be disciples. Thankfully, people with such opinions didn't form a consultation committee for Jesus' birth, or the result could have been something like this:

"The committee has decided a man is eminently more suited for this job. A woman simply wouldn't have the right theological training required. Sure, Mary's a virgin, but does she know the Torah well enough to repeat it backward under water? No. We'll elect George to do it. He has a sensible-looking beard." Flippancy aside, *discipleship* is defined as "anyone who follows Christ" (*The Macquarie Dictionary*).

The word *disciple* does tend to bring to mind 12 men who toured the countryside with Jesus and who continued His work following His ascension. But it extends far beyond that to cover anyone of any gender, age, race, social status, or educational level who follows Jesus.

This includes women, who were last to leave Jesus' tomb before sundown and first to see Jesus after His resurrection.

**God has a reason for making
you a disciple.**

Jesus didn't make explicit statements about the roles of men and women. He spent a lot of time with women. He valued them and their work, treating them the same as men—all in a society where Pharisees thanked God that they hadn't been born female.*

Being a disciple can lead women anywhere, from being a judge like Deborah, to Phoebe, the deaconess and minister commended by Paul in Romans 16, and to Dr. Ella Simmons, General Conference vice president.

If you're following God's leading and feel compelled to do His work, don't let anyone hold you back, regardless of your gender. God has a reason for making you a disciple. That reason might not see you doing anything out of the ordinary, but there's nothing better than doing what He wants.

*MyJewishLearning.com. Liturgical Texts. Retrieved October 27, 2006 from http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/liturgical_texts/Overview_Jewish_Prayer_Book/

Sunday
January 27

Transformative Women

LOGOS

Mark 5:24–34; Luke 1:26–38; John 4:4–30

If you hang out in the pews a bit, you might notice something. There are more people making decisions than being disciples. Deciding to *be* a Christian is a piece of cake compared to *becoming* Christlike. Making the decision can take just a moment, but *becoming* like Jesus is a life-long journey of transformation.

Our world is one in which position, influence, prestige, and power are highly valued. Perhaps that is why there are more decision makers than disciples. Two core qualities Jesus modeled—humility and submission—are perceived as weakness in a patriarchal or male-dominated culture. However, a key part of transformation is the willingness to experience brokenness: Humility + Submission + Brokenness = Transformative Power.

For proof that this math works, we only have to listen to the stories of some New Testament women. It's no accident that these stories feature the gender with the lowest social status in the ancient world and still in some cultures today. Most likely, they were acutely aware of their supposed limitations. But that didn't stop God from using them as a transformative power in their world.

**Then, out of the blue, an
angel walks in. . . .**

**Young + Unmarried +
Woman = Mother of Jesus Christ, God's Son (Luke 1:26–38)**

Imagine this: You're engaged to be married. A good girl from a nice religious home, you have not indulged in premarital sex. Then, out of the blue, an angel walks in and announces that you've been chosen to give birth to the leader of a revolutionary regime. Not just any regime, mind you, but the kingdom of God!

What would you have said?

Mary asked, "How can this happen? I'm not married." The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, NCV). Submitting her reputation to a greater purpose, Mary responded, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!" (Luke 1:38, NCV).

Let's look at the math again: Young + Unmarried + Woman = Mother of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Mary's humility and submission gave birth to the "greatest story ever told."

Sick + Broken + Woman = Healed and Restored (Mark 5:24–34)

Imagine this: You've been bleeding for 12 years. You suffer constantly from fatigue, and you've spent all of your money hoping for a cure. Then you hear about a traveling healer. Deciding you've got nothing left to lose, you head out in search of a healing touch.

There are so many people crowded around Him that it takes all your energy just to get within arm's reach. In desperation you reach out.

Suddenly, the Healer whirls around and asks who touched Him. Everyone is looking right at you. They realize you are the bleeding woman, the unclean one, and they recoil. But then the Healer says, " 'Dear woman, you are made well because you believed. Go in peace; be healed of your disease' " (Mark 5:34, NCV).

Let's look at the math again: Sick + Broken + Woman = Healed and Restored. This woman was humble enough to admit through her faith that one touch would heal. Many witnessed the power of her belief and thus came to faith themselves.

Thirsty + Promiscuous + Woman = Conduit for the Messiah's Message (John 4:4–30)

Imagine this: It's the hottest part of the day, and you've snuck out to the well for some water. You're hoping no one else will be out there in this heat. Unfortunately, there is a Man sitting there. As you approach, He asks for a drink of water.

The Samaritan woman was shocked that a Jew spoke to her. Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans. When she questioned Him on it, the Stranger said something cryptic about having water that would quench her thirst forever. He somehow knew all about her failed relationships, yet was still quite happy to talk with her. He then announced that He was the Messiah! She rushed back to the village to tell others what she had found.

Let's look at the math again: Thirsty + Promiscuous + Woman = Conduit for the Messiah's Message. Broken relationships were restored when this woman forgot her social stigma and carried the message of the Messiah to her village.

While these stories focus on women, a life transformed is just that—regardless of your gender.

REACT

1. Did Jesus disciple women differently from the way He disciplined men? Explain your answer.
2. Why should gender never be an issue when discussing discipleship?
3. What weakness might be your strength if submitted to God's transformative power?

Monday
January 28

Jesus Reaching Women

TESTIMONY

Luke 8:1-3; 10:38-42

“Jesus knows the burden of every mother’s heart. He who had a mother that struggled with poverty and privation sympathizes with every mother in her labors. He who made a long journey in order to relieve the anxious heart of a Canaanite woman will do as much for the mothers of today. He who gave back to the widow of Nain her only son, and who in His agony upon the cross remembered His own mother, is touched today by the mother’s sorrow.”¹

It was often women who reached out to Jesus in the deepest, most meaningful ways. “The fragrant gift which Mary had thought to lavish upon the dead body of the Saviour she poured upon His living form. . . . The women who bore spices to the tomb found their errand in vain, for He had risen. But Mary, pouring out her love upon the Saviour while He was conscious of her devotion, was anointing Him for the burial. And as He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from

His redeemed ones forever.”²

“The women repeat the words again and again.”

The first to declare His resurrection, women rushed to share the good news, “He is risen, He is risen! The women repeat the words again and again. No need now for the

anointing spices. The Saviour is living, and not dead. They remember now that when speaking of His death He said that He would rise again. What a day is this to the world! Quickly the women departed from the sepulcher ‘with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word.’ ”³

REACT

1. Why do you think women played an integral role in Jesus’ ministry?
2. What does Jesus reaching out to women say about Him in today’s context?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 560.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 789.

Discipleship Through the Ages

EVIDENCE

Luke 8:1–3; 10:38–42

There were many occasions when the women in Jesus' life were willing to listen to the teachings of the Master. The story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42) is a shining example of Christ's loving acknowledgment of Mary's willingness to sit and listen. And He expresses His disappointment that Martha is not more like Mary in her keen interest in His wisdom.

Christ was always surrounded by His followers, of which there were at least a handful of women (Luke 8:1–3). Christ was happy to have women with Him as He traveled. Following His ascension, there were a number of women in the small assembly awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14).

These women were just as willing to travel and preach as the men. A young girl answered the door when Peter was released by God from prison (Acts 12:13, 14). A husband and wife team—Ananias and Sapphira—was struck down for not giving what they had offered to the Lord (Acts 5:1–11). It was a kind-hearted woman named Tabitha who gave of herself to help the poor. Upon news of her death, Peter was sent for and raised her from the dead (Acts 9:36–42).

Christ was happy to have women with Him as He traveled.

There are also many prominent women through the history of our church who have shaped and changed the way we worship. The most prominent of these is Ellen White. Her ministry and many of her visions have shaped what we believe and the way we worship.

There have been a great many female disciples in history, women who strove to develop Christ's character with the help of the Holy Spirit. Part of this character involves pointing others to this way of living: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV). It is a genderless call—all are invited to participate.

REACT

1. What are some ways we can become better disciples in our church?
2. Can you think of other examples of Christ interacting with female disciples during His time on earth?

Sitting at the Feet of Jesus

HOW-TO

Phil. 4:9

Martha worked hard during the day and into the evening. "I don't have time for all this sitting about and chatting, why doesn't Mary help me?"

"'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:41, 42, NIV).

Mary was captivated by Jesus and the great things He had to tell her. She chose to put Him first and soak up every precious word He uttered. Mary understood how important it was to be grounded in Him and His teaching. Her faith is evident and points to a large part of discipleship.

Other women throughout the Bible also have shown their faith and dedication. Mary, the mother of Jesus, showed faith when she accepted what the angel told her (Luke 1:26–38). The woman who touched Jesus' cloak showed great faith and courage to step outside her comfort zone (Mark 5:25–34), as did the widow who put her last coins into the temple treasury (Mark 12:41–44). Faith and a willingness to express and share it is something that makes a person a disciple of Christ.

So how can we build and share our faith to be effective disciples?

1. Incorporate prayer into daily activities. Pray when you wake up and before you sleep, in the car on the way to work, during breaks, or as you exercise.

2. Make time to study the Bible. Find a quiet place in your home or at a local park, and devote at least half an hour, twice a week or more, to delve into Scripture. Learn texts from the Bible and think about a different one each time you open the fridge or enter a certain room.

3. Fellowship. Spend some quality time with other Christians. Pray and study together. Encourage each other.

4. Be witnesses. Share your faith with others when opportunities arise; be courteous, practice hospitality, and treat people with respect.

REACT

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in effective discipleship?

Incorruptible Beauty

OPINION

Prov. 31:30

Have you ever spent time with a woman who isn't trying to be beautiful, but who is reflecting godly beauty from the inside out? This genuine beauty can come only from God, and I would guess that such a woman has been sitting at the feet of Jesus, as His disciple.

Women must be humble and teachable disciples before they disciple others. You may say that the women of Jesus' day had an advantage because they were taught by Him in person. But Jesus said, "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7, NKJV).

Does this mean women today can be disciples as much, if not more, than the women we studied this week? To love God is to love and disciple those around us, pointing them to Jesus. We can do this only if we ourselves have been in His presence in unbroken relationship through daily surrender and openness to His will. This allows His love to be carried to a world craving genuine, beautiful, Christlike love.

What if we dedicated more of our time to reading the Word and searching our hearts to see what items we need to give up that are not in line with God's love? How many more women disciples would there be? How much more could God's love rid us of our selfishness and fill us instead with His *agapé* love?

**To love God is to love and
disciple those around us. . . .**

What amazing things God can do through a woman of faith who doesn't justify herself or depend on herself, but who "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in [her] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6, NKJV). In and of ourselves, we cannot do a thing: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17, NKJV). When we realize this and rest in God, we become effective disciples. That's when He allows His glory to accomplish great things through us.

As another ancient wise man put it, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30, NKJV).

REACT

1. How can one learn to be a "woman [or man] at rest"?
2. Is women's spirituality different from that of men? If so, how?

Friday
February 1

Who Can Be a Disciple?

EXPLORATION

Luke 1:38

CONCLUDE

Anyone who follows Jesus is His disciple, regardless of gender, age, race, or social status. There is controversy in our church about what role women should fill. In the Bible, we see many stories of women who ministered to Jesus and to whom Jesus ministered—women who were His followers, His disciples.

A woman of faith who spends time with God and prayerfully seeks to carry out His will for her life will find a ministry that best serves the community she lives in and best glorifies God. He will accomplish great things through any person who desires to serve Him.

CONSIDER

- Forming a focus group to come up with ideas about how to involve more women or more people from other groups who may feel left out in ministry.
- Writing an article about a person who became involved in ministry in spite of opposition due to gender.
- Asking yourself if your gender or age or social status (or any other part of your unique circumstances) is keeping you from fulfilling God's plan for you in ministry.
- Role-playing in a group how you could respond to someone who has a problem with women in ministry.
- Re-reading Mary's song in Luke 1:47–55 and finding or writing a melody that matches her words.
- Discussing the actions of women in the Bible who ministered to others.

CONNECT

Morris L. Venden, *How Jesus Treated People*, "How Jesus Treated Women," pp. 72–77; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World*, "Leading Ladies," pp. 184–193.

Ethnicity and Discipleship



"I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, NRSV).

He Is No Fool

INTRODUCTION

2 Cor. 5:20

Five young missionaries and their families chose to move to the jungles of Ecuador to make contact with the Waodoni, a tribe that was known for its vicious attacks on other tribes and even on members within its tribe.

Patience the missionaries reached out. They dropped gifts to the Waodoni from a plane. They prayed for success to bring the gospel to this tribe.

Then it seemed as though the moment had arrived. The five men landed on a sandbar in the middle of the Curary River and set up a base camp. Soon they made friendly contact with three Waodoni, even giving short plane rides to them.

However, there was evil lurking, and soon the five missionaries lay dead in the Curary River. Would their desire to disciple the Waodoni tribe die with them? Eventually, Rachel Saint, a sister of one of the missionaries and Elisabeth Elliot, the wife of another one of the missionaries, were able to reach out again to the Waodoni. They ministered to their physical needs—breaking down barriers that no one else had been able to reach across. As the Waodoni learned about the God who had left trail markings for them to follow (the Bible), they chose to follow Christ.

Soon they made friendly contact with three Waodoni. . . .

Today, the Waodoni are a peaceful tribe. The courage it took for five young men to reach outside of their comfort zone ultimately led to their deaths. In response, the movement of Christian mission grew. The families of the martyrs have heard from countless other missionaries that the story of the Waodoni inspired them to reach out to other people groups and disciple them.

Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Peter Fleming, Ed McCully, and Roger Youderian were ready to lay their lives on the line to cross ethnic divides. Their desire to disciple anyone who needed to know Christ was more important to them than life itself.

Jim Elliot wrote the following in his journal: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." As you study this week's lesson, spend time thinking about how God is asking you to step out of your comfort zone and disciple someone you might otherwise pass over. He might not be calling you to disciple a group like the Waodoni, but He's calling you to disciple someone. Are you willing to give so you can gain?

Xenophobe or Xenophile?

EVIDENCE

Deut. 10:19; Matt. 25:31–46; 28:19; Luke 5:30–32

The key to understanding transcultural discipleship is the Greek word *xenos*, meaning “strange,” “foreign,” and “alien.” The apostle Paul unnerved many people with his chameleonlike “all-things-to-all-people” approach to soul winning. Even today, many Christians are more comfortable with a homogeneous congregation where physical, cultural, and philosophical differences do not intrude.

This kind of xenophobia is not unique to our time. New Testament Judaism had refined the notion of a chosen people into a homogeneous culture. The *xenos* were tolerated because, as Moses had reminded them, the Jews had once been strangers in Egypt (Deut. 10:19). But these foreigners were outsiders who would not experience full participation in Jewish society.

From this context, Jesus revisited the relationship between the chosen people and strangers. In the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31–46), the King and Judge claims to have been visited as a stranger (*xenos*). Those represented by the goats can't figure out when that visit happened. For them, acknowledging their Lord as *xenos* was inconceivable, for surely they would have recognized Him. Even at the judgment, there apparently will be those who find it impossible to personally accept cultures and traditions different from their own.

This kind of xenophobia is
not unique to our time.

In our contemporary world, we have secular disciples of Paul's strategy. Microsoft has customized their software to interact with people in many different languages. In doing so, they have expanded their reach to customers who are not proficient in English. Coca-Cola has found many ways to adapt their branding and advertising for each of the countries where they sell their portfolio of beverages.

If they can embrace the foreign in order to sell more colored sugar water, then surely we must be willing to do the same for the gospel.

REACT

1. Is xenophilia a spiritual gift that enables foreign mission service, or is it an obligation for every disciple?

2. When does a culturally homogeneous church become a liability to full discipleship?

Ethnic Contacts and Discipleship

LOGOS

Matt. 15:21–28; Luke 7:1–11; John 1:3–14; Acts 10:9–35; 11:14–30

An ambassador is a representative for a sovereign government, trained in culture and diplomacy. Ambassadors deliver messages in a variety of ethnic settings. To be effective, they need to build relationships and influence country leaders. They lay the ground work so that crucial messages will not be rejected out of hand when delivered during times of stress. We are called as ambassadors for Christ. So we should be prepared to come in contact with people who are different from us.

Ambassador Training 101 (Matt. 15:21–28; Acts 10:9–35)

Both of the stories in these texts reveal the importance Jesus places on reaching out to people of different backgrounds. In the first story, the Canaanite woman is from an ethnic group that is despised by the Jewish leaders. Jesus enters into debate with a group of Pharisees over their views on defilement. Many believe that contact with a foreigner brings defilement. After this discourse, Jesus journeys up the coast to illustrate an important point on ethnicity and discipleship—God’s kingdom is inclusive!

**He calls this woman a dog
to her face.**

The woman cries out to Jesus. The teachable moment has arrived. But Jesus refuses to answer her as she pleads for help. If we stop reading at verse 23, we have justification for our own intolerant tendencies. We don’t have to talk with, sit with, or be with people who are different than we are.

Do the disciples pass the “ambassador test”? They clamour for a more overt form of rejection toward this Canaanite. Now He has their attention. He speaks some stinging words to the woman. It’s likely that Jesus is repeating “locker-room” language often heard in Peter’s circle of friends. He calls this woman a dog to her face. Given what we know about Jesus and His love, we may surmise that He speaks these words in a questioning form and with a look of kindness.

Notice that this mother finds Jesus by ignoring His disciples’ protestations. Our attitude and response is important when we are on the receiving end of hurtful words and actions. Ethnic insults, silence, or rejection by other church members should not stop us from receiving God’s blessing.

In the second story about Peter and Cornelius, the theme is similar. God reveals that there is to be no partiality in His kingdom. He wants to reach us all. Sometimes

He sends people to us. Sometimes He sends us as ambassadors to them. Peter was asked to leave his comfort zone and reach out to those who were ethnically and culturally different from himself.

Who Is Worthy? (Luke 7:1–10)

Jesus thinks everyone deserves His compassion. But it is our tendency to judge based on wealth, position, and prestige. In contrast to the Jews, the centurion shows us how to reach across such lines. He displays a genuine interest in and adjustment to another culture. Notice the sensitivity of the centurion to Jewish thoughts on defilement—"Don't come to my house." The centurion also downplayed his own importance by stating, "I am unworthy." It's hard to win friends if we suffer from a superiority complex.

All People (John 1:3–14)

Jesus created all things—all people, all personalities, all ethnicities! He will not leave us to destruction without trying to reach our hearts. He will try everything. He sent John (verse 7) to call "all people." He came Himself (verse 11), giving up everything for us.

Some of us listen, and He gives us power to help Him reach our friends. Put your name in the blanks and listen to what Jesus seems to be saying:

_____ (your name), you know that student that sits next to you in class? She won't listen to Me right now (pause), and it breaks My heart. Will you become friends with her? My Spirit is in you, and this is how I choose to help both of you grow into My kingdom.

Your response may well be: *Father, I love You, but I am so tired because I stayed up late last night. I have an exam to prepare for and a paper to write. Besides, she's so different from me. It's obvious she has no interest in spiritual things.*

Jesus speaks again: *I understand how you feel. I came and lived with some unresponsive people, remember? I changed the way I lived and even changed My body and mental capacity to reach you. This is what I ask of you: Become all things to all people that through you, I might save some. Will you follow Me? Figure out a way to be friends with her, _____. At least try! Please!*

REACT

1. Who is God sending into your life right now for discipleship training?
2. As an ambassador, what group of people do you come in contact with that others in your church cannot reach?
3. Do you ever try to make friends with people not in your comfort zone?
4. Why can we be more effective witnesses if we are blind to ethnic and cultural differences?

At the Cross—A Level Playing Field

TESTIMONY

2 Cor. 5:20

“The religion of Christ uplifts the receiver to a higher plane of thought and action, while at the same time it presents the whole human race as alike the objects of the love of God, being purchased by the sacrifice of His Son. At the feet of Jesus, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, meet together, with no thought of cast or worldly pre-eminence. All earthly distinctions are forgotten as we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced. The self-denial, the condescension, the infinite compassion of Him who was highly exalted in heaven, put to shame human pride, self-esteem, and social caste. Pure and undefiled religion manifests its heaven-born principles in bringing into oneness all who are sanctified through the truth. All meet as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon One who hath redeemed them to God.”¹

“There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God’s sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth.”²

“The Lord desires His chosen servants to learn how to unite in harmonious effort. . . . In every word and act, kindness and love will be revealed; and as each worker fills his appointed place faithfully, the prayer of Christ for the unity of His followers will be answered, and the world will know that these are His disciples.”³

**“There is no caste with
God.”**

REACT

1. Even though your society may not have an established caste system, are there ways that people groups are classed, thus making them feel less appreciated? What can you do to change this within your sphere of influence?

2. How do you envision discipleship among many people groups?

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 330.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 483.

Looking Through to the Soul

HOW-TO

Acts 10:9–35; 11:14–30

Every era has its own set of judgments and ways to separate people. We tend to see the struggles of our own era as unique. But Satan has been trying to pit us against each other from the beginning.

Jesus appears to be swayed only by a person's relationship with God. He looks through the layers of class, occupation, race, and hometown to see a person's faith. Is that what we see? It probably isn't. In God's eyes, your mother, your coworkers, the Queen of England, a veterinarian, a prostitute, and a farmer in a distant land are all the same. They are all individuals in need of a Savior. God alone sees the desires of our hearts. He really does see the inside.

It is no simple thing to see beyond the stereotypes we have grown into and often don't even recognize. Peter's life-changing experience gives us a good start.

1. Be willing to change your ideas. Peter received a vision that seemed contrary to everything he had ever been taught. But as the Holy Spirit revealed this new concept to him, Peter was convicted of God's will.

2. Follow God's leading with action. After the vision, Peter received an invitation to teach a group of Gentiles. Scripture says he

was still standing there thinking about the vision when they came to him! But Peter wasted no time. He invited them into his home as guests and then went back to Capernaum to speak with the people there.

3. Think and act humbly. It is never appropriate for us to think of ourselves more highly than others. The Bible tells us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:43, 44). And we know that in God's eyes, not one of us is better than another. Read how Peter handled this in Acts 10:25, 26.

God alone sees the desires
of our hearts.

REACT

1. How will these three steps change the way you think and act toward people or groups of people you have thought of as different from yourself?

2. Would you have been able to make the quick attitude change that Peter made after his vision? Why or why not?

Thursday
February 7

Praying for the “Common and Unclean”

OPINION

Acts 10

Like the Jews of Peter’s time, we are abundantly receiving the light of truth. We have been entrusted with not only spiritual food, but also with incredible educational opportunities and economic resources.

But we are so much like Peter—largely oblivious to people in other cultures, languages, and religions. Comparing numbers reveals that the world average is one Adventist to every 454 people, but Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen have one Adventist to every five million.¹ Of the 28 million Burmese people living in Myanmar, only 0.1 percent are Christian.² What we do about statistics like these reveals whether or not we consider our neighbors “common” or “unclean.”

Evidence suggests that we can be doing more. Two major commitments are needed to bridge the gap between the “Cornelius” and “Peters” of today. First, disciples must be willing to relocate and accept another ethnic group as their own. Second, there is a need for increased mission offerings. Adventists today give less

than \$0.04 to the Sabbath School mission offering for every \$1.00 of tithes. In 1930, Adventists were giving \$0.60 for every \$1.00 of tithes.³

Love must manifest itself in action.

Finding disciples willing to dedicate themselves in these two areas

is one of the many challenges impeding progress. However, Jesus did not say that it would be easy to overcome cultural and political obstacles. What He does say is, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18, 19, NIV). Love must manifest itself in action. Who will go up on the housetop and pray daily for a radical worldview conversion?

REACT

What are some methods of delivering the gospel to economically impoverished ethnic groups? What about to the more prosperous?

1. Homer Trecartin, planning director, Adventist Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. E-mail correspondence, September 15, 2006.

2. Joshua Project. People-in-Country Profile. Myanmar (Burma) Retrieved October 30, 2006, from <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=101776&rog3=BM>.

3. Gary Krause, director, Office of Adventist Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. E-mail correspondence, September, 25, 2006.

Andrew Trecartin, Kendall, New York, U.S.A.

Expand Your World

EXPLORATION

Gal. 3:28

CONCLUDE

Ken Ham, founder of the ministry Answers in Genesis, has the unique perspective that we're not divided into many races. He's fond of saying there's only one race—the human race. Perhaps that's the attitude the Holy Spirit was getting at when He inspired Paul to write, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:28, NIV). It's easy to keep aloof from people different from yourself. But in order to grow in Christlikeness and to take the gospel to the world, we need to overcome prejudicial, judgmental, and exclusive attitudes in our own hearts.

CONSIDER

- Visiting a place or event where you know you will be a minority to see what it feels like.
- Becoming a host family to a high school or college student from abroad.
- Going through the Gospels and listing all of Jesus' interactions with non-Jews and women (the two lowest classes in His society). Write out what you learn from each story.
- Checking out the Web sites for Global Mission (www.global-mission.org) and Adventist Frontier Missions (www.afmonline.org) and deciding how you want to regularly lend your support. It could be through finances, prayer, encouraging letters to missionaries, short-term mission trips, donating supplies, etc.
- Viewing Ken Ham's DVDs *Where Did the Races Come From?* and *Only One Race* to get an interesting viewpoint on the origins of racism and the unity of the human family.

CONNECT

Ben Carson, *The Big Picture*; Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Don Batten, *One Blood*.

Preparation for Discipleship



“ You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven’ ” (Matt. 5:14–16, NRSV).

Preparation Begins With “The Daily Death”

Sabbath
February 9

INTRODUCTION

1 Cor. 15:31

“I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31, NKJV).

During one of his sermons, the assistant pastor of my church asked the congregation an interesting question. It goes like this: Once, there were three frogs on the bank of a small river. They all decided to jump into the river. Now, how many of them were left on the bank? None? One? Two? Or all three? If you just apply a little bit of your analytical skills, you can correctly answer this question. Three. Making a decision to jump and jumping are two different things. However, they are unequivocally connected. Similarly, the decision to be a disciple of Christ and actually being His disciple are two different things—or two sides of the same coin. Just because you’ve made a decision to be His disciple doesn’t mean that you’ve actually prepared to be one.

When you talk about preparation, you must start at the end. The end is death. I know this is an abrupt declaration. But when “Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die,” said Dietrich

**When you talk about
preparation, you must start
at the end.**

Bonhoeffer, a young German theologian who was martyred by the Nazis in 1945.

In the modern world, there is a wide-ranging debate among Christians about the possibility of being a true disciple of Christ. A media-controlled culture; immorality as part of normal life; fast-paced lifestyles mixed with work and family; peer pressure; prestige issues; and identity crises are some of the culprits working against Christian discipleship. With such as these, who has time for dying to self?

But thank God, Christ didn’t feel that way. In order to make us His disciples, He decided to become a sacrifice for all of us. Therefore, for us to be His true disciples, we must become sacrifices too. This is possible only as we daily die to self—our old habits, our old lifestyle, and anything else that hinders our preparation for being true disciples of Christ.

Sunday
February 10

Not Title, Nor Position. But Heart

LOGOS

Matthew 5-7; 10:1; 10:5-11:1; Mark 3:1-19; Luke 6:12-16

Being a disciple is not just about following orders or being a good employee or even being productive. Being a disciple means that your heart is so open to the transforming power of Jesus that everything you do springs from pure motives. In this lesson, we will be looking at Jesus' recipe for genuine discipleship.

"Be Attitudes" for Disciples (Matthew 5-7)

Jesus is sitting on a mountainside surrounded by masses of people eager to hear His words. But it was His disciples He was really instructing (Matt. 5:1, 2). So listen up, if you consider yourself His disciple. Learn from Him how to do it right.

Because Jesus always works from the inside out, He lays the foundation by telling His disciples that they'll be blessed when they're willing to be " 'poor in spirit' " and " 'meek,' " and when they " 'hunger and thirst for righteousness' " (Matt. 5: 3, 5, 6, NIV). Each of these requires us to realize that we can become disciples

**There was no Wite-Out®
involved when God wrote
the Ten Commandments.**

only through God's power. In order to have any sort of success in understanding these things, we must realize that no building will stand without a strong foundation. If we don't have the type of spirit found in the Beatitudes, we'll never be strong disciples.

Once we get our foundation straight, everything else comes naturally. The Beatitudes are foundational to Christian discipleship (Matt. 5:3-12).

Salt and Light (Matt. 5:13, 14-16)

Salt is meant to enhance the flavor of food, not dominate it. Therefore, when it says to be the salt of the world, it doesn't mean you are the world, it means you are to go into the world and spice things up! Make the world a better place.

We also are called to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16). Most of us tend to be a flashlight with low batteries. When people grab a flashlight in the middle of the night, the brighter the better, right? But still, if the flashlight is dull, you can use that little ounce of light to help you find a brighter light. Likewise, though you may be that duller light, you still might be able to lead someone to the brighter light. But truthfully, you can't change your own batteries or light bulb. There is a Higher Source that has to help you with that. When you accept His help, you can become the brighter light.

The Law (Matt. 5:17–20)

There was no Wite-Out® involved when God wrote the Ten Commandments. These laws are absolutes. God has revealed who He is through them, so if you try to change them, you're trying to change Him.

Sinister Plotting (Matt. 5:21–37)

Most of the time actions speak louder than words. But what about when you're thinking lustful or hateful thoughts? Matthew 5:21–37 says that dwelling on evil in your heart is just as bad as if you've committed sin. So if you simply marinate in the fact that you're jealous or hateful toward someone and secretly wish he was gone, in some sense you've already killed him. If you look at a member of the opposite sex and wish that you could take off your wedding ring so you could talk to that person freely, you've already cheated on your spouse.

Who's in Charge Here? (Matt. 10:1; 28:18–20)

Matthew 10:1 states that Jesus gave His disciples authority to take on the world. But in Matthew 28:18, He said that all authority had been given to Him. Immediately after saying that, He commissioned His disciples to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So authority has been given to us by Christ, and once again, it's an outside source inside of us shining out.

Building Social Capital (Matt. 10:5–11)

In Matthew 10:5–11, we read that Jesus sent His disciples empty-handed to minister in the towns. He did so because they would be forced to connect and create community by serving others and by depending on others. Jesus knew that if they made themselves useful and then asked for help, people would automatically open up to them and value them.

Jesus: Intercessor for His Disciples (Luke 6:12–16)

After consulting with the rest of the Godhead, Jesus chose 12 disciples and sent them on their way as apostles. Mark tells us that after a frenzy of activity, Jesus called His disciples to a quiet place where He commissioned them to lead out as apostles (Mark 3:13–19). Often it is in our encounter with Jesus in the quiet places of life that our calling to discipleship is sealed.

A View of Our Sinfulness

TESTIMONY

Matt. 5:14–16

Have you ever been to a worship service where someone went up front to give their testimony for all the wrong reasons? You sit in the pew and listen, but it soon becomes apparent that the individual is talking not about what God has done in their lives, but about their own accomplishments.

Matthew 5:14–16 calls us to be witnesses for God. It's our responsibility to carry the Word of God to the world through our actions, not by reminding others of our accomplishments and gloating over our own righteousness. "We have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."¹

Being a disciple of Christ is about our ability to recognize our sins and come to Christ for forgiveness. "The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal

"We have nothing in ourselves of which to boast."

Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the Word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image."²

Being a disciple of Christ is about spending each day trying to reflect His image. Giving a testimony of our individual works doesn't make any of us a disciple. It's only through constant communion with God that we can make changes in our lives and become beacons for God's Word. God calls us to be disciples for Him, not through words or demonstrations, but by allowing Christ to come into our lives and transforming us so His remarkable glory is evident in our actions.

REACT

How do you reflect Christ in your life?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

A Culture of Entitlement

EVIDENCE

Matthew 5–7

Our society is fixated on perfection and entitlement. We need to look like the celebrities in the magazines. We need to have success at a young age. And we're entitled to whatever our heart desires. We've bought into the idea of a perfect body, a perfect family, a perfect life. And we're suffering for it. Rates of depression and anxiety are skyrocketing, particularly in young adults.*

The ideas of "work" and "learning" also are being replaced, mostly by rapid technological developments. No longer do we have to "learn" how to do anything; it's all on the Internet. And we don't have to "work" anymore. There are millions of businesses whose sole purpose is to do your work for you. Want supper? Call for delivery. Too busy to get that university paper done? Hire an online service to write it for you! Our society is full of loopholes, and we believe we're entitled to it. But there are no loopholes to entering the kingdom of God, and we're not worthy of it.

In Matthew 5–7, Jesus teaches the multitudes exactly what working for the kingdom of God entails. And it's not easy. There are sacrifices we must make. And we'll make mistakes, because we're human. We're not entitled to the kingdom of God, either. God has chosen us to join Him. He's extended an invitation to live with Him forever. He's given us His instructions, and He expects us to follow them, for His will is perfect and just. Becoming a disciple of Christ can be backbreaking work. It's not for the lazy and indifferent. It requires a decision and pledge to live one's life for God. And it requires a humble heart, one that knows that were it not for God's grace, we would never be able to shroud ourselves in Christ's perfection.

Only God is entitled.

Only God is perfect. Only God is entitled. Preparation for discipleship requires a change in attitude from entitlement and perfection to an attitude of selflessness, with the realization that we are not infallible. Only God is.

*"Under Pressure," Katie Paster (October 9, 2006). Retrieved November 27, 2006, from <http://www.dailyorange.com/media/storage/paper522/news/2006/10/09/Feature/Under.Pressure-2337937.shtml>.

How to Be a Disciple

HOW-TO

Matt. 18:1-4; 28:18-20; John 6:44, 45

Perhaps one of the most concise statements of what it means to be a disciple is found in the closing verses of Matthew. Read chapter 28:19 and 20. This directive is simple. Spread the gospel, and don't stop until everyone has heard about it. Yet at the same time, it's incredibly challenging. Going to the entire world? But before you start stressing, remember that the task of spreading the gospel isn't ours alone. God is the One who gave us this mission, and He wants us to get on board. He wants to work through us in miraculous ways. We must allow His message to flow through us and not rely on our own merits to get the job done.

So how do we go about doing this work in our daily lives? Do we just start going door-to-door or board a plane for some foreign country? While some of us may feel called to do just that, it's possible to start much more simply.

1. Drink deep draughts from the Source of life every day (John 6:44, 45). Remember, our task is to let God work through us. Without His Spirit, we can accomplish nothing. A daily, moment-by-moment immersion in God is necessary to be a successful disciple. God will teach us what to do (John 6:44, 45).

2. Be humble (Matt. 18:1-4). Discipleship is about service. Look for ways to humbly serve others in your surroundings. Do you see someone completing an unpleasant task? Help them! Help someone you don't even like. Are there homeless or needy people in your area? Offer them clothing and food, or work at a food bank.

3. Be real. Be ready (1 Pet. 3:15). With daily exposure to God, and with His Spirit abounding in your life, you don't need to stress about sharing your faith. God will become an integral part of your life. Relating your experiences to others will be as simple as talking about yourself and serving others.

REACT

1. God does not need us to spread His message to the world (Luke 19:40). He has, in His wisdom, given us the privilege of serving Him in this way. How does this viewpoint change your view on discipleship? What purpose might God have in mind by working through us to complete His plans?

2. What things should we do to prepare ourselves for our life of discipleship?

3. What obstacles might we encounter as disciples of Christ?

God's Light in Your Life

OPINION

Matt. 5:14–16

Jesus called Himself the Light of the world in John 8:12. And in Matthew 5:14–16, He's telling us that we're the light of the world! He's calling us to spread His light across this dark planet. The sad thing is, many times we're not much of a light at all.

In the world we live in now, it's not cool to talk about Christ. So sometimes we don't stand up for God when we should. We've been sucked into a society where it's best to just "fit in." Sadly, that's what many of us do—just "fit-in." We disregard the life God calls us to live.

As Christians, we should not be this way! Christ tells us that we're the light of the world. But too often when we go out into the world, we either dim our light or turn it off. Ephesians 5:8 says, "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (NIV).

Serving God involves giving your life to Him so you can be an instrument in spreading the good news. One way that every single person can be a disciple is by living a life that reflects Jesus' character. Shining the light is not just about attending church weekly, going to prayer meetings, and attending prophecy seminars. It's about living a life that brings honor and glory to God.

As we grow in our discipleship, we must realize that just preaching the Word isn't enough. We must live the Word! We must identify those things that hold us back from being fully devoted to God. If it's a sin we keep committing, ask God for deliverance. If it's a lifestyle habit, allow God to change it. If it's a burden, give it to God. If it's a problem, trust in Him.

As we grow in our discipleship, let us live as we are called—as children of light. Study God's Word. It's our instruction book for life. Pray. It's the divine connection to our Lord. Ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit so you may be a more effective disciple.

Jesus is coming soon! Let's turn our lights on now. Let's live a life that truly exemplifies the character of Jesus. Today, let God's light be revealed in your life!

Let's turn our lights on now.

REACT

1. Why do we forget to spend time with God?
2. How important is the Holy Spirit in being an effective disciple?
3. What difference does living a life in the light make when it comes to witnessing?

Discipleship 101

EXPLORATION

Matthew 5; 6

CONCLUDE

So, are you a disciple of Jesus? It's hard to say, "Yes, I am," because it feels arrogant to consider ourselves in the same company with Peter, James, and John. Besides, being a real disciple requires us to die to our selfish desires. Instead of getting up in the morning and saying, "What do I want to do today?" a disciple asks, "What does God want me to do today?" But remember, a change this dramatic rarely happens all at once. It's a commitment that grows and deepens. Try these activities to continue the discipleship process in your own life.

CONSIDER

- Creating a screensaver for your computer that illustrates the beatitude that means the most to you.
- Coming up with a T-shirt slogan that would identify you as a follower of Jesus.
- Reading through one of the Gospels until you find a text that reveals something about Jesus that you hadn't considered before.
- Choosing one book, a CD, or a video from your collection that you feel is impure and destroying it in a dramatic way—perhaps with a hammer or a blowtorch.
- Discovering something you can do for your neighbors or community that will "let your light shine."
- Finding a personal testimony of a Christian convert on a cassette tape or online. Pay attention to the point where the person was called to follow Christ. How would you have reacted in the same situation?

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, chap. 7, "The Test of Discipleship."

Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom*; S. M. Anderson, The Disciples Pledge, at <http://www.theboc.com/freestuff/disciplespledge/index.html>.

Experiencing Discipleship



**“He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them,
‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny them-
selves and take up their cross and follow me’ ”**

(Mark 8:34, NRSV).

Putting Knowledge Into Practice

INTRODUCTION

Mark 8:34

“You must practice your piano lesson!” Those are the instructions music teachers give their students at the end of every lesson. Parents also spend time telling their sons and daughters the same thing. Children who forget about practicing their piano lessons know the consequences—they will not be able to perform well in front of their teacher the next time!

People say practice makes perfect. We all know that by doing something over and over again, we finally will be able to do it well. However, in science, practice does not necessarily make something perfect. To prove a concept true or false, scientists set up an experiment. To prevent random errors, they often replicate the experiment and take the average result.

In science class, teachers often have their students do lab work in order to understand scientific concepts and how to apply those concepts to daily life. Doing the experiment helps the students understand how to make the concepts practical.

Doing the experiment helps the students understand how to make the concepts practical.

Jesus followed the same method of teaching His students. “He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves

and take up their cross and follow me’ ” (Mark 8:34, NRSV).

In order to understand science concepts, students must put aside their previous assumptions and follow their professor's instructions. Likewise, Jesus said that if we want to become His disciples, we have to put away all of our knowledge about right and wrong and fill our mind with the truth about God. Science students have to make science practical by following the teacher's instructions. Likewise, Jesus instructs His disciples to make His teachings practical by taking up their cross and following Him. Following Him means to accept His instructions as a way of life.

Unfortunately, many people who profess to be disciples of Jesus never put away their concepts about right and wrong. In order for disciples to put Jesus first in their lives, they must put themselves last. For Christians, to become the highest means to become the lowest. This is contrary to worldly belief. However, without putting away worldly concepts, we never will be able to feel and appreciate God's love. We never will be able to become disciples of Jesus without putting Him first.

The Ultimate Task of the Church

EVIDENCE

Matt. 28:19

Luke tells us that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). How did Jesus accomplish this? He called people and made them disciples.

The early church also called and built disciples:

1. Those who turned to Christ on the Day of Pentecost devoted themselves to the teaching and fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42).

2. Apollos had ardently accepted Jesus, but he needed Priscilla and Aquila to further enlighten him (Acts 18:26).

How can we devote ourselves to the teachings of Jesus and His disciples? On many occasions, Jesus taught with parables. He said: We must become as little children (Matt. 18:3, 4) and carry our own cross (Mark 8:34). What do these things mean? We must humble ourselves at the foot of the cross. Experiencing discipleship is to be like Him in character.

The Greek word for *disciple* is *mathētēs*, meaning "a follower," "a learner." The disciples were followers of Jesus and learned from Him. This is the primary emphasis of Matthew 28:19. *Making disciples* is the main verb in this verse. The other verbs—*baptizing*, *teaching*—are subordinate.¹

The ultimate task of the church is making disciples.

It seems that most of us are satisfied doing only the subordinate work of baptizing and teaching rather than the main work of making disciples. We want to teach and baptize, but we forget that the ultimate task of the church is making disciples. Sweazey said, "The church neglecting the follow up for discipleship is the great scandal of evangelism."²

As a church body, one of our goals is to make disciples. A person achieves this goal when he or she lives a consistent Christian lifestyle. When a person changes his or her behavior, we know that that person has integrated Christian beliefs regarding that behavior into his or her daily life.

REACT

What are the differences between conducting evangelistic crusades and making disciples? What are the similarities?

1. Myron S. Augsburger, *The Communicator's Commentary: Matthew* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), p. 330.

2. Carl M. Sweazey, *Evangelism That Evangelizes!* (Ventura, Calif.: Clark's Printing Co. Inc., 1968), p. 194.

Born to Be a Disciple

LOGOS

Matt. 17:1–13; 18:1–4, 24; 28:19, 20; Mark 8:27–30; John 6:41–58

Ephesians 2:10 states that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (NIV).

As Christians, we were reborn to be Christ’s disciples. When they hear the word *disciple*, many people think about Christ’s 12 disciples and about ministers and pastors. But the Bible notes that whoever accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior becomes His disciple.

A disciple is a person who has been born again, joined the church, identified his or her spiritual gifts, and accepted the responsibility of a role in the church compatible with those gifts.¹ As Ellen White wrote: “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary.”²

Peter describes the people of God as “living stones, . . . being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” “A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9, NIV). What a wonderful description of discipleship these verses are. Discipleship is part of the newborn process.

Personally experiencing discipleship is having a relationship with Christ.

The only way you cannot be a disciple is to openly refuse to be one.

Personally Experiencing Discipleship (Matt. 8:27–30)

When Jesus asked His disciples what others were saying about His identity, they reported the various opinions they had heard. When He asked for their opinion, Peter identified Him as the Messiah. Personally experiencing discipleship is having a relationship with Christ. To know Him personally, we must walk with Him, talk with Him, and work with Him. Doing so helps us to make disciples of others. “Personal effort for others should be preceded by much secret prayer; for it requires great wisdom to understand the science of saving souls. Before communicating with men, commune with Christ. At the throne of heavenly grace obtain a preparation for ministering to the people.”³

“Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in

Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.¹⁴

Experiencing the Humble Spirit (Matt. 18:1–3)

To be a disciple of Christ, we must have a humble, teachable spirit, like that of a child. A humble spirit shows the world that we “are a letter from Christ, . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3, NIV).

Experiencing Discipleship Through the Communion Service (John 6:53–56)

Regarding the importance of communing with our Creator, we read that nothing “is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God. We should show by our daily lives that we have peace and rest in the Saviour. His peace in the heart will shine forth in the countenance. It will give to the voice a persuasive power. Communion with God will ennoble the character and the life. Men will take knowledge of us, as of the first disciples, that we have been with Jesus. This will impart to the worker a power that nothing else can give. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived.”¹⁵

“When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact.”¹⁶

REACT

1. How do we maintain a personal relationship with Christ in the busy world today?

2. What can you and the church do to help all church members experience discipleship?

1. James W. Zackrison, *From Spectators to Disciples*, p. 24.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 149.

4. *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

5. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 512.

6. *Steps to Christ*, p. 77.

The Real Partakers of Discipleship

TESTIMONY

John 13:34, 35

"In this last meeting with His disciples, the great desire which Christ expressed for them was that they might love one another as He had loved them. Again and again He spoke of this. 'These things I command you,' He said repeatedly, 'that ye love one another.' His very first injunction when alone with them in the upper chamber was, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' To the disciples this commandment was new; for they had not loved one another as Christ had loved them. He saw that new ideas and impulses must control them; that new principles must be practiced by them; through His life and death they were to receive a new conception of love. The command to love one another had a new meaning in the light of His self-sacrifice. The whole work of grace is one continual service of love, of self-denying, self-sacrificing effort. During every hour of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit

will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another.

"This love is the evidence of their discipleship."

"This love is the evidence of their discipleship. 'By this shall all men

know that ye are My disciples,' said Jesus, 'if ye have love one to another.' When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence."*

REACT

1. What perspective does today's lesson give regarding doctrine?
2. How does 1 Corinthians 13 describe self-sacrificing love?
3. Think of an irritating situation in which you recently found yourself. Did your reaction display the type of love that shows we are Jesus' disciples? If not, how could you have reacted differently?

**The Desire of Ages*, pp. 677, 678.

The Beauty of Discipleship

HOW-TO

Acts 18:23

Jesus—while traveling in Judea and Samaria—taught His disciples not just by telling them what to do but also by living out His own instructions. Through His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, He shows us how to help others become His disciple (John 4:1–42):

1. Because Jews and Samaritans hated each other, it was unlikely that this woman would risk a harsh reaction from Jesus by offering to draw water for Him. So He took the initiative by requesting of her the favor of a drink (verse 7).

2. Jesus served her hidden needs with information about the “living water,” her past, and the proper way to worship God (verses 10–24).

3. Jesus did not embarrass the woman regarding her past. Rather, He complimented her on her truthfulness (verses 16–18).

4. Through this information, He allowed the woman herself to draw some conclusions about who He might be (verse 19).

And so by the time Jesus finally reveals His true identity, she is convinced He is the Messiah. How do we know this? She runs back to her village, so eager to tell others that the Messiah has come that she leaves her water jug behind (verses 28–30).

Jesus did not embarrass the woman regarding her past.

Thus, Jesus showed His disciples then, and us now, how to break down barriers that prevent people from following Him.

Disciples who have been born again learn how to use their talents on behalf of their Teacher so that others also will become disciples (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:7–11; Eph. 4:11–13). Christ's disciples must always remember that they were reborn to be workers for the kingdom of God, just like the Samaritan woman.

REACT

1. How can you incorporate Jesus' method of discipling the woman at the well in your daily life?

2. How do you think Jesus is helping you realize your full potential as His disciple?

Thursday
February 21

Humble Discipleship

OPINION

Matt. 18:1-4

In Matthew 18:1, Jesus asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then calling a child in the crowd to stand, He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (verses 3, 4).

There are many things that are interesting about children. Here are two:

1. While the disciples were arguing about which one of them was the greatest, Jesus told them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35, NRSV). Then he took a little child and said, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me" (verse 37, NIV). "The simple trust and loving obedience of a child represent traits of character highly treasured in the kingdom of heaven. Notice that Jesus speaks of 'little' children, those who have not learned, from the poor examples set by adults, the sins of doubt and disobedience."*

**We must act and behave like
our Teacher.**

2. Children are like magnets—people are drawn to their simplicity and trust. When we accept Christ as our Savior and spend time with Him, we learn to follow His teaching. Many times we are busy with activities that benefit only ourselves. We forget to become like little children who attract others to them. We forget that, as disciples of Christ, we must help other people become disciples too.

When we are called to become His disciples, we must learn to act as our Teacher does—even to set aside and forget ourselves so there is only Jesus on our mind and in our heart. We need a continuous relationship with Christ, involving Him in every aspect of our lives (Col. 2:6).

REACT

Why does today's world make being like a little child in terms of humility and trust in Jesus even more important?

*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 639.

More Than a Fan Club

EXPLORATION

Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 8:34; 1 Pet. 2:5–9

CONCLUDE

Discipleship is different from being a member of Jesus' "fan club." Disciples aren't cheering spectators—they're in the game. And they're in it for the long haul, not merely until their Leader's popularity fades. Disciples put Jesus first in their lives by putting themselves last. They are called to create other disciples (learners) who have the same zeal for Jesus.

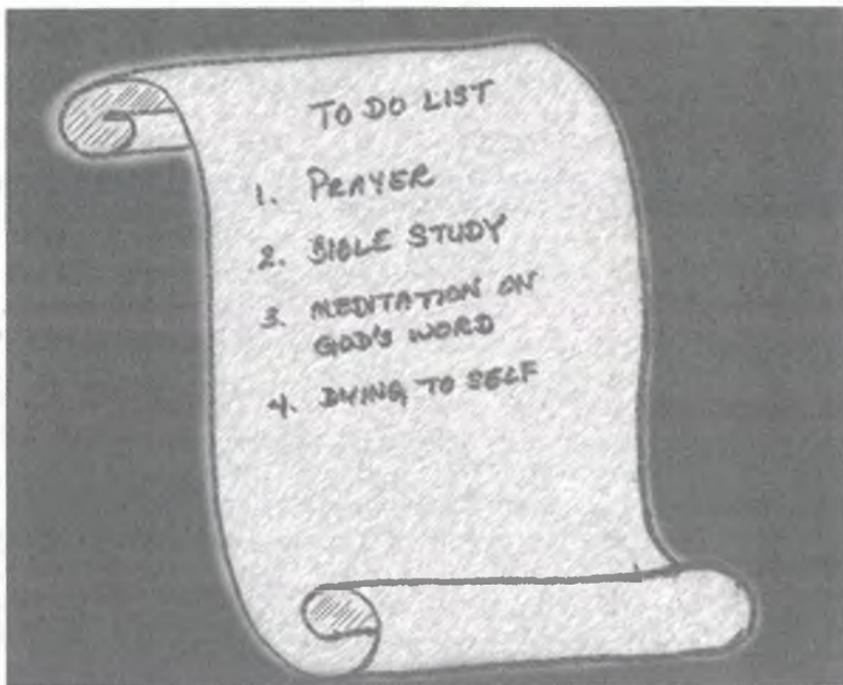
CONSIDER

- Creating a 2-D or 3-D model of the wilderness tabernacle, including the courtyard. Label your role as a 1 Peter 2:5 "priest" or "priestess" at each position. (Example: Label the laver "Ask for personal forgiveness and cleansing so that I may intercede for others.")
- Writing a blog entry (or posting an e-mail to a group) that describes an event when someone "witnessed" to you—such as a salesperson who tried to interest you in a product, a friend who tried to convince you to go to a sports event, or even a person of another faith who tried to share that faith with you. Describe what the "witnesser" did effectively, and then what was ineffective.
- Composing a ballad (country or folk style) containing two or three verses and a chorus. Write the song as though sung by Jesus, on His knees at the Last Supper trying to persuade Peter to allow Him to wash his feet.
- Comparing training for your favorite sport to becoming a better disciple.
- Treating yourself to 15 uninterrupted minutes of "fish watching" at a local aquarium. What similarities do you find between the fish and the people for whom Jesus wants His disciples to "fish".
- Listing your "fish"—the people in your life who do not know Jesus. Pray for these people not merely as a Christian but as a disciple of Jesus.

CONNECT

Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*; Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*.

Following the Master: Discipleship in Action



“Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?” (Mark 8:35–37, NRSV).

Do You Dare?

INTRODUCTION

Matt. 28:18–20

Being a disciple of Christ is a unique and honorable position. Yet despite that, there are times when being His disciple is not so easy a thing to be. Actions do speak louder than words, and that's exactly what discipleship is all about. Being a disciple is having the opportunity to roll up your sleeves and get "dirty" in your Christian walk, to help others, and to share how your relationship with Christ has affected your life.

What does such discipleship take? How do you start? Where do you get support? How do you keep on track? What does discipleship in action look like?

To get started on the right track, you need to ensure some key things on your "To Do" list—such things as prayer, Bible study, meditating on God's Word, and dying to self. No one said being Christ's disciple would be an easy task; but the Lord says, "I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:9, 10, NIV).

Wanting to care for others in and out of our community and working in ways that the church will grow are characteristics of Christ's disciples. As our text for today says, Jesus will be with us to support us as we endeavor to make disciples of people from every nation of the earth.

"We are to go—whether it is next door or to another country—and make disciples. It is not an option, but a command to all who accept Jesus as Lord. We are not all evangelists in the formal sense, but we have all received gifts that we can use to help fulfill the Great Commission. As we obey, we have comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is *always* with us. 'Always' literally means 'all the days' and refers to the presence of Christ with each believer every moment. This would occur through the Holy Spirit's presence in believers' lives."*

Being a disciple is having the opportunity to roll up your sleeves. . . .

*Life Application Bible Commentary, WORDsearch 7.

The Cream of the Crop

LOGOS

Matt. 8:14, 15; 10:34–37; 28:18–20; Luke 5:17–26

Making Disciples (Matt. 28:18–20)

In Jesus' time, the education of children started at 4 or 5 years old.¹ Teaching focused mostly on the Torah—the first five books of the Old Testament—and centered on law, history, and ethics. Both reading and copying Scripture were emphasized, and large portions were memorized. This elementary level of education was completed by the time the student was about 12 or 13 years old. At this point, the education of girls was complete, and they remained at home to help with family duties. Boys who were not above-average students began learning the family trade.

The best students continued their formal education. The teacher was the local rabbi, a greatly honored resident of the community. The students studied the writings of the prophets, and memorization remained a large part of the curriculum. By about age 14, many of the students had memorized Genesis to Malachi.² At age

14 or 15, a few of the most outstanding students sought permission to study with a famous rabbi and travel with him for long periods of time. These students were called *Talmidim*, or “disciples.”

“It’s time to quit playing at religion.”

“Students were passionately devoted to their rabbi and noted everything he did or said. This meant the *rabbi-talmid* relationship was an intense and personal education. As the rabbi lived and taught his understanding of the Scripture, his students listened, watched, and imitated so as to become like him. Eventually they would become teachers passing on a lifestyle to their students.”³

Jesus was called rabbi (Mark 10:51, John 3:2; 4:31, NIV), which means “teacher,” or more literally “great one” or “distinguished in knowledge.”⁴ Being accepted by a rabbi as a *talmid* was a great honor. “The rabbi would consider the student’s potential to become like him and whether the student would make the commitment necessary. It is likely most students were turned away. Some of course were invited to ‘follow me.’ This indicated the rabbi believed the potential *talmid* had the ability and commitment to become like him. It would be a remarkable affirmation of the confidence the teacher had in the student.”⁴

When Jesus asked His 12 disciples to follow Him, He was honoring them. He was telling them, “I have confidence in you. I see potential in you.” And so they dropped everything to become His disciples.

A Bumpy Ride (Matt. 8:14, 15; 10:34–37; Luke 5:17–26)

Jesus is still calling people to follow Him, to become His disciples. But what does that mean for us today?

Spending time with Jesus, gaining wisdom and knowledge from Him, learning to love others through His example, becoming like Him—this is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. And with that comes our mission as Christians, to share the gospel message with our family, our neighbors, and the world. But telling people about Jesus and staying true to principle often can bring strife rather than peace. It can be a bumpy ride. Fear of ridicule and other forms of persecution can cause Christians to “water down” their beliefs. But this response isn’t truly answering God’s call to discipleship.

“It’s time to quit playing at religion. It’s time for us to heed the prophetic call. Time is too short, the night too dark, for us to cruise along as Christians. We must wake up, get up, and get out, taking seriously our profession to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁵

Perhaps then others may say of God’s work through us, “ ‘We have seen remarkable things today’ ” (Luke 5:26, NIV).

The Power of Faith (Luke 5:27, 28)

Being a disciple of Jesus means embracing Him, His teachings, and His commission to go and make disciples. It means giving our whole hearts and lives to Him and becoming like Him. It is possible for us to do this because of His power and grace, and because of the confidence He places in us when He says, “Come and follow Me.”

REACT

What does it mean for us to follow Jesus? Do we always need to “drop everything” we are currently doing, as the disciples did?

1. This and some other historical information was retrieved December 2006 from <http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=2753>.

2. *In the Dust of the Rabbi*. Retrieved December 2006, from http://www.vosregnumdei.com/archives/2006/05/in_the_dust_of_the_rabbi.php.

3. *Follow the Rabbi: Rabbi and Talmidim*. Retrieved December 2006, from <http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=2753>.

4. *Ibid.*

5. William G. Johnsson, *Adventist Review*, January 19, 2006, p. 5.

Lights! Camera! Action!

TESTIMONY

Isaiah 58; Matt. 25:31-46

The texts for today's lesson give us a vivid picture of discipleship in action. Both texts show that in addition to knowing the truth, discipleship also involves what we do for others. In fact, discipleship in action is vital to our salvation and the salvation of others.

"God imparts His blessing to us, that we may give to others. And as long as we yield ourselves as the channels through which His love can flow, He will keep the channels supplied. When you ask God for your daily bread, He looks right into your heart to see if you will impart the same to others, more needy than yourself. When you pray, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' He watches to see if you will manifest compassion to those with whom you associate. This is the evidence of our connection with God,—that we are merciful even as our Father who is in heaven is merciful. If we are His, we shall do with a cheerful heart just what He tells us to do, however inconvenient, however contrary it may be to our own feelings. . . ."

**"All His gifts are to be used
in blessing humanity. . . ."**

"It is in doing the works of Christ, ministering as He did to the suffering and afflicted, that we are to develop Christian character. It is for our good

that God has called us to practice self-denial for Christ's sake, to bear the cross, to labor and sacrifice in seeking to save that which is lost. This is the Lord's process of refining, purging away the baser material, that the precious traits of character which were in Christ Jesus, may appear in the believer. . . ."

"All His gifts are to be used in blessing humanity, in relieving the suffering and the needy. We are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to care for the widow and the fatherless, to minister to the distressed and downtrodden. God never meant that the widespread misery in the world should exist. He never meant that one man should have an abundance of the luxuries of life, while the children of others should cry for bread. The means over and above the actual necessities of life are entrusted to man to do good, to bless humanity."²

Read Luke 12:33, 1 Timothy 6:18, and Luke 14:13. "These are the Lord's commands. Are the great body of professed Christians doing this work?"³

1. *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 165.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 370.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

Where is Your Heart?

EVIDENCE

Matt. 6:19–21; 13:44–46

The texts for today are about money. But I'm hoping that by the time you're done with today's lesson, you will understand why I chose them.

One of my favorite topics is history, not because I'm a genius with names and dates, but because I love a good story. So it's no surprise that I look to parables for lessons. I also enjoy words, so the fact that one can switch the words *treasure* and *heart* in Matthew 6:21 and not change the meaning of the verse is fascinating to me. But those are not the real reasons I chose those verses. The real reason is this: Discipleship has four primary components: beliefs, focus, power, and action.

Beliefs: If you ever want to be confused, try to understand all the belief systems the world has to offer. Because I have chosen to be associated with Christ and have taken on His name by being a Christian, that narrows the field of beliefs with which I am willing to spend my time.

Focus: It doesn't matter what belief system you *say* you believe in; the question really is how do you spend your time? I once had a friend who was fascinated with the Beatles. They managed to come up in about every conversation. Whether she thought she was or not, she was a disciple of the Beatles.

Whether she thought she was or not, she was a disciple of the Beatles.

Power: In the tide of human events and the struggle between good and evil, people have the greatest impact by aligning themselves with an individual or movement that can give their actions meaning and power. Pop icon Bob Dylan stated it rather well in one of his song titles, "Gotta Serve Somebody."

Action: One day over lunch, a software vendor and I were discussing world events and the multiplicity of religions (even among Christians). I mentioned that I judged a person's true religion (regardless of his/her denomination) by how it impacted his/her life. Did the person's life glorify God? Did it benefit those around him/her? What was his/her religion worth to himself/herself?

So I ask you, what and whom do you believe in? And what is it worth to you? Where is your heart?

Carrying Clothes to the Bathhouse

HOW-TO

Matt. 11:29; Mark 2:13–17; Luke 6:40

Wherever he goes, you go. When he's getting ready to speak, it's you who sets up the benches. You're the one blessed to do his grocery shopping *and* prepare his dinner. You live with him day in and day out. Are you his servant? No, you have been granted the privilege of being the rabbi's disciple.

This is how a disciple served his rabbi in ancient times. But what about now? We can't really head to the grocery store for our rabbi, Jesus. We can't ready the meeting room for His talks or deliver His clothes—neatly folded and warmed—to the bathroom after His shower. Or can we?

Mark Tittley states that New Testament disciples had three roles they needed to fulfill—learner, follower, and reproducer.

Learner. Studying the Bible, praying, reading books that help us understand the Bible, etc., are some of the ways we can learn about Him. Listening to godly people who are wiser than we are, accepting their advice, and being open to ideas that may differ from ours are other ways we can learn about Him.

Follower. We need to imitate Christ. His love, His likeness, His everything should become who we are. But we don't stop there. We lead others to become disciples of the

We need to imitate Christ.

Rabbi as well. We bring them to church, tell them what He has done for us, and show them what He is like by what we do.

Reproducer. Having been transformed into a disciple of Jesus means we are easily identifiable as His disciples by our actions. Jesus showed compassion for all types of people. Maybe for us this means being friends with someone we don't like, doing a chore for our roommate or spouse that they don't like to do, or preparing a meal for our "enemy."*

REACT

Are all people who are kind disciples of Jesus? What makes the difference between them and Christ's followers?

*Mark Tittley, "The Basics of Discipleship," *The Commitment Level Model*. Retrieved December 2006 from <http://www.sonlifeafrica.com/model/basics.htm>.

It's a Matter of Two Questions

OPINION

Mark 8:34, 35

The word *discipleship* is a word we've all heard. It floated around the Sabbath dinner tables when we were kids; we come across it occasionally in the Bible. We hear the word, and then continue whatever it is we're doing. We don't stop to ask, *What is Christian discipleship? Or more important, How do those two words affect my life?* Hopefully, today's lesson will get your mind turning around these two questions.

What is *Christian discipleship*? Discipleship is a commitment to walk with God. Having a growing, constant relationship with God is not just important, it's vital. Having Christ's unconditional love and support is the only way to become His disciple. Christian discipleship is not simply doing good acts thought to be Christian; it's having Christ in your heart.

Far too many temptations and obstacles are thrown into our lives. Movies, games, music, and many other things we desire may appear to be of quality, but in reality, they suck us into a worldly attitude, and away from what matters most: Jesus Christ. We think we have too many things to do, or maybe it's that we are afraid to publicly show our allegiance to Jesus or to speak about Him. Whatever the reason may be, we find ourselves making excuses not to become a disciple. It's easy to avoid making a godly commitment, especially a public one, and too few young people take a stand for God.

It floated around the
Sabbath dinner tables when
we were kids. . . .

But probably even more important than asking *what is Christian discipleship?* is the question *How do those two words affect my life?* We must stop our busy schedules and examine our own lives. Instead of asking where we can fit Christ into our lives, we need to ask how our lives can fit around Jesus, because Jesus has to be the "what" around which we fill our schedules. When we do plan around Jesus rather than planning Him around us, our life becomes much more meaningful, much more fulfilled. Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:34, 35, NRSV).

Being a Christian disciple is not just standing up in front of thousands of people preaching mighty sermons. That is a gift certain people have. But being a Christian disciple is having Christ in your heart and following Him wherever He may take you. And that is a gift we all can have!

Jamie Timon, Laurel, Maryland, U.S.A.

Losing Your Life Everyday

EXPLORATION

Mark 8:35–37

CONCLUDE

A radical in social and political terms is a person who has disdain for the status quo and the establishment in power. Radicals are normally in the minority and are not considered mainstream in any sense of the word. Being a true disciple of Christ may include the same marginalization for those who are willing to endure the sacrifice. A radical discipleship calls on all those who are willing to heed the call, “Follow Me,” not tomorrow but today. Accepting this call may very well mean that we will lose our lives today in order to have life everlasting.

CONSIDER

- Joining a volunteer organization that is not religiously affiliated but that relates to our Adventist mission of “making people whole.”
- Following an athletic team through an entire season. Keep up with the statistics, record, and personnel changes. What kind of commitment to the team would you have to make?
- Counting the number of deaths in the newspaper on a regular day. How many of these lives could have been saved? How many of these lives were touched by Jesus?
- Giving up a particular indulgence whether it is chocolate, television, soda, video games, movies, etc. Record on a calendar how many days you last. Also, record every day that you are tempted to indulge in that activity.
- Calling a Christian talk radio show and challenging the listeners to live a radical discipleship that includes going wherever Christ leads us.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ, pp. 57–83. See also *Steps to Christ Study Guide*, Lesson 3, found at: <http://www.whiteestate.org/guides/SC.html>.

Bill Knott, *Eyes Wide Open*, found at <http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=20061526&page=5&PHPSESSID=9602bbead9d29e8106bfca88a2a56cb7>.

Discipleship Under Pressure



“If you have raced with foot-runners and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you fare in the thickets of the Jordan?” (Jer. 12:5, NRSV).

Seeing Through God's Eyes

INTRODUCTION

1 Sam. 16:7; Col. 1:24; 1 John 3:1

Are you a people watcher? Do your eyes gaze over the congregation as you sit in church? Do you watch people in the mall or while you're waiting in line at the grocery store or the cafeteria? Chances are Jesus was a people watcher, too. I wonder sometimes what the world must have looked like to Him while He lived here. He had great spiritual insight which helped Him to look beyond the false exteriors people always build to try to cover up their real selves.

For example, consider His choices for His 12 disciples. Four of them must have smelled like they had been working in a fish cannery. And two of them were the type to harbor a grudge so bad that if Jesus had given the word, they would have prayed for fire to rain down on their enemies. Another was a tax collector (people back then really hated tax collectors), and still another was in love with money. But He saw beyond all of these foibles. He saw what they could become through His grace as His disciples.

Four of them must have smelled like they had been working in a fish cannery.

The next time you find yourself observing people, try to look at them through God's eyes. Perhaps you will see people who need you to disciple them, just as Jesus disciplined the 12 apostles. Just as He disciplines

you. Here are some things to consider as you people watch:

1. "Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost."¹

2. "How many of the wandering ones have you . . . sought for and brought back to the fold?"²

3. "When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion. In every assembly of worship, there are souls longing for rest."³

So, start looking at others with God's vision. And allow the Holy Spirit to use you to disciple those around you regardless of their age, gender, race, social status, or appearance. Doing so will relieve much of the pressure you might feel when it comes to helping others grow in Christ.

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 191.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

If Only . . .

EVIDENCE

Matt. 4:18–20; John 1:35–37, 40, 43, 48

Have you ever thought to yourself, *Oh, if I only had the money, . . . if I only had the wisdom it took, . . . if I only lived in the right house . . . in the right city . . . in the right century. Oh, if only . . . then I'd be able to lead people to Christ and disciple them?* However, our texts for today tell us that we don't have to wait for just the right circumstances to do that.

Think about how Jesus gathered His first disciples. Did they have the right amount of money, the right amount of wisdom? Were any of them living in a mansion? Did any of them dress in a costly array of finery? Today's texts describe just what it was these disciples were doing when they first met our Lord. Some were walking on the dirt roads near the River Jordan. One was discipled beneath a fig tree. Yet another one was discipled while sitting at the city gate scamming the people as they entered Jerusalem, and some were fishing.

This is all evidence that Jesus and you can disciple anywhere, any time, under any type of circumstance. The place you are in is always the right place. The right time is always the time that is now.

Oh, if only . . . then I'd be able to lead people to Christ. . . .

It is also important to remember that Peter and Andrew already knew Jesus when He called them to follow Him (Matt. 4:18–20). He had talked with them previously (John 1:35–42), and they most likely had heard Him preaching, so they knew what kind of Man He was. In a similar way, the type of person you are witnesses to those around you. Are you polite, courteous, and kind so that when people learn you are a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, they will be attracted to your religion? What about those people who already know what church you belong to? Once you claim to be a Christian, the witnessing begins no matter how much money you have or what type of a house you live in.

REACT

What have you been thinking that you must have or be doing before you can disciple another person? Based on today's lesson, think of three specific ways you can disciple someone with what you already have or are already doing.

Monday
March 3

Pressure From Many Sources

LOGOS

1 Kings 18; Matt. 26:56; Luke 9:51–56; John 6:1–15; 12:1–6; 18:1–11; 21:15–19

Pressure From Authority (1 Kings 18)

During the famine, Elijah asked King Ahab for a meeting with all the Israelites. Elijah had a thought-provoking question for them, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him!” (1 Kings 18:21, NIV). Because he had confidence that God was with him, Elijah was not afraid to speak words of reproof to Ahab.

God is looking for men and women who will stand firm under pressure; who will not obey human policy at the expense of God’s law.

Pressure From Peers (Matt. 26:56)

The disciples became terrified when they witnessed Judas betray Jesus. They believed that all hope in Him as their King was gone. Jesus had warned them about their lack of strength, but they promised Him that they were strong. However, because they had slept through their prayer time, they did not have the spiritual strength needed for what lay ahead. Therefore, in

“He desires only voluntary service. . . .”

the pressure of the moment, instead of showing their support for Jesus, they panicked.

After Jesus’ ascension and the time of renewal in the upper room, “these very apostles who were timid as hares, grew to be bold as lions after the Spirit had descended upon them.”¹

Pressure From Religious Zealots (Luke 9:51–56)

When the disciples asked fire to consume the Samaritans, they were too zealous. However, Jesus’ methods of discipling do not include force. “He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love.”²

Pressure From Authority (John 6:1–15)

The disciples were doing their best to help with the crowds. But after several hours of listening to Jesus, they knew the people were hungry. When Jesus posed the question to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” (verse 5, NIV), the disciples felt even more pressure to find a way to feed the

crowd. Jesus used this experience to teach them to trust in Him for the solution to problems.

“Perhaps this story speaks to you because you are following him as the disciples were. You are challenged by Jesus to see the needs of the people around you and you feel overwhelmed. When Jesus asks Philip where they can buy food for the crowd, he does it to make the disciples think. . . . [He] asks the disciples to do what they are capable of. . . . He himself provides for the needs of the people, not the disciples.”³

Financial Pressure (John 12:1–6)

Judas was the treasurer of the group. While he portrayed himself as a successful businessman, he really was using the position and some of their money for his own interests. Judas didn't have love for the poor or for Mary. Instead, he was self-indulgent and loved the life of ease. When Mary anointed Jesus' feet with costly ointment, Judas's questions led the others to question her motives.

Pressure From Gangs (John 18:1–11)

Judas brought the “gang” of chief priests and Pharisees to the Garden. He had buckled under financial pressure and the desire to be accepted by the “gang.” But Jesus quickly took command, asking that the disciples be allowed to leave.

Because Judas had put himself under Satan's power, he wasn't able to see God's way.

Pressure From the Still, Small Voice (John 21:15–19)

Jesus asked Simon Peter three times if he loved Him. And three times Simon Peter verbalized this love. But Jesus wanted him to really think about what that love would cost him, to think about his willingness to “feed my [Jesus'] lambs.” Was Simon Peter really ready spiritually? Could he accept the challenge? Can you?

REACT

1. When someone questions your Christian beliefs or asks why you are a Christian, do you try to change the subject? If so, why?
2. Do you feel pressure from someone who has authority over you? Do you have a hard time fulfilling other's expectations? Why do you think this is so?

1. C. H. Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening Daily Devotional* for the Morning of March 27, 2006. Retrieved December 7, 2006 from http://bible.christiansunite.com/Morning_and_Evening/chme0327.shtml.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 487.

3. Sermon on John 6:1–5. Pete Edwards. April 27, 2003. Retrieved December 5, 2006, from <http://www.barclaychurch.org.uk/SERMONS/TEXT/SER.2003.04.27.html>.

Tuesday
March 4

God Will Not Fail

TESTIMONY

1 Kings 18

After the fire fell from heaven, "Elijah addressed Ahab, 'Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.' While Ahab went up to feast, Elijah went up from the fearful sacrifice to the top of Mount Carmel to pray . . . and most earnestly supplicated God to send rain. Six times successively he sent his servant to see if there was any visible token that God had heard his prayer. He would not become impatient and faithless because the Lord did not immediately give the token that his prayer was heard. . . . The seventh time [the servant] informed Elijah that there was a small cloud to be seen, about the size of a man's hand. This was enough to satisfy the faith of Elijah. He did not wait for the heavens to gather blackness, to make the matter sure. . . . He sends a message to Ahab by his servant, 'Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.' "**

"Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. Then

the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel" (1 Kings 18:45, 46, NKJV).

From Elijah, we receive an example of strength in God and an example of tremendous trust and humility.

Like him, we need to stand firm for what we believe, while from Israel we learn to be wary of letting God's warnings pass unheeded and falling into deception.

"This was enough to satisfy the faith of Elijah."

REACT

1. Israel turned their backs on God and repeatedly refused to listen to His warning, yet God still sent Elijah to them and took them back when they repented. What does this tell us about God's character?

2. Do you think God was testing Elijah's faith by not instantly sending the rain? How does He test us in the same manner?

* "The Laodicean Church." *The Review and Herald*, October 7, 1873.

Conquering the Fear of Discipling

HOW-TO

Josh. 1:6, 9, 18; Ps. 34:7; Prov. 9:10

I remember when I first joined the church at the age of 19. At that time, there was a major emphasis on getting out and knocking on doors to invite others to become Christians. Now for some people that may be a great way to do things. But there are those of us who are extremely shy even when it comes to sharing our faith.

For those of you who share this timid spirit, and even for those of you who are a bit outspoken, you may wish to consider the following suggestions to witness to those around you:

1. Begin by taking small steps. When I say goodbye to people, I say, "God bless you. Have a good day." I couldn't tell you how many times people have stopped walking away as they departed and returned to thank me for those words. In fact, the other day as I walked out of one of the rooms of the rehab center where I help take care of people, I spoke those words. The paraplegic gentleman in the bed and his wife both invited me to come back. This led to a spiritual conversation. Finally, I asked the couple what church they went to. They then asked me what church I attended. When I told them that I was a Seventh-day Adventist, they smiled and told me they were currently reading several of our books, and that they were both quite interested in prophecy.

There are quite a few
avenues to the soul.

I know a girl who takes care of people in a hospital as a nurse assistant. She's very shy about talking to people, so she hums hymn tunes. This has helped her to have several conversations with people who have recognized the tunes and who in turn began talking about them to her.

2. Choose another avenue to the soul. Who says the only way you can disciple others is to knock on their door? There are quite a few avenues to the soul. If you're not comfortable speaking, then choose something you are comfortable doing. Try writing, art, cooking, or even just a smile.

REACT

1. Are you the timid type when it comes to witnessing? If so, what are some ways you could take some baby steps out of your comfort zone?

2. What were some of the advantages in the way Jesus paired up His apostles as He sent them out to disciple? Though we're not told how He paired up His friends, how would you have matched up His disciples with one another, and why?

Thursday
March 6

"Anointing" Under Pressure

OPINION

Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-6

Have you ever felt that warm, tingly feeling and then the full "face flush" as you were either being singled out, or of your own choosing were moving to a point of "front and center"? Just put yourself in Mary's place for a few minutes. She was attending a feast hosted by Simon (who had been healed of leprosy). Let yourself feel the intensity of the moment. Look around the room, and notice who is present and who is sitting on either side of Jesus. Somehow, Mary was able to separate herself from the "crowd" and move unnoticed to Jesus' feet.

In my opinion, Mary had learned the lesson that we all need to learn as disciples. She had made a conscious choice to live in God's kingdom. Having chosen for a while the offerings of the world, she knew the feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, rejection, and worthlessness those offerings can bring. Now she was choosing "that good part" (Luke 10:42, NKJV).

The people of Jesus' time did not get it. They were looking for an earthly king with all the trappings. They were programmed into "doing." But when they asked Jesus when His kingdom would come, He responded by saying that the "kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, "Here it is,"

or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20, 21, NIV).

Mary obviously had figured this out. That is why she was able to kneel at Jesus' feet with total disregard for what the others around her were doing, saying, and thinking. Herein lays the strength of a disciple under pressure. It is in Jesus that we find our true identity! It is in Him that we find our true self-worth! It is in Him that we have the assurance of eternal life!

She had made a conscious choice to live in God's kingdom.

REACT

1. Take time to evaluate your own life. How much of what you do and say are still tied to Satan's earthly kingdom? Does this world still have a hold on your life?

2. Thinking back to Abraham's call, do you feel it is possible to totally separate yourself from this world and enter a "virtual kingdom," thus living in God's kingdom until He comes in the clouds of heaven?

3. Having embraced God's kingdom, would it not be easier to be a "disciple under pressure" than to try to do it in our own strength?

Avoiding Discipleship?

EXPLORATION

Jer. 12:5

CONCLUDE

Ministry to others is not the easiest thing God asks us to do. People are so different and have so many flaws. Then there are the roadblocks from external sources, such as financial pressure or pressure from those who think that what we're doing is all wrong. If only we had more talent, more resources, more time, then it would be easier. God never promised it would be easy to reach out to others, but when we stand up for what we believe and totally trust Him to provide whatever resources we need, He will never let us down.

CONSIDER

- Ministering to any group of people you have never thought about helping because it may not seem comfortable.
- Trying to connect with people through outdoor activities such as nature walks or whitewater rafting, waiting for opportunities to talk about God.
- Composing a song about the blessings we can receive through mentoring and discipleship.
- Writing a short story about a person who, through totally relying on God, is able to overcome self-doubt and external pressures and successfully lead someone to experience Christ for the first time.
- Doing a poll of people in your area about their interests, then calculating what activity would have the best draw to bring people to a small group where you or someone you know could begin friendship evangelism.
- Reflecting on what might be stopping you from ministering to others. Pray to overcome these things in your life so you can serve God more fully.

CONNECT

Christ's Object Lessons, "Who Is My Neighbor?" pp. 376–389.

Ronald Alan Knott, ed., *College Faith*, "Dying by Denying, Daring to Declare," pp. 4, 5; Philip G. Samaan, *Christ's Way of Reaching People*.

More Lessons in Discipleship



“Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid’ ” (Matt. 14:27, NIV).

The Ultimate Fear Factor

INTRODUCTION

Heb. 2:14, 15

Our cat Bandit loves being outside. He stands in front of the kitchen door in the mornings—after he's eaten his *and* his sister's food—and whines until we let him out. If we don't beckon to his call immediately, he walks up the door with his paws and tries to turn the handle.

Unfortunately, a downside to his loving the outdoors is that we have paid a handsome sum to the veterinarian for fixing the consequences of his wanderings: broken toes; swollen, infected eyes; a punctured side. What's even worse is giving him his medicine. In contrast to our usual phlegmatic, trusting cat, he becomes sorely afraid of us. He squirms, wails, and scratches in order to escape our grasp. He views us as the enemy.

When Adam and Eve chose not to trust God's word and to disobey Him, they brought a new dimension to the relationships of all created beings. They introduced *fear*—of God and each other. They also ushered in the ultimate fear, which keeps many people captive for their entire lives: the fear of death (Heb. 2:14, 15). Humans will work in frenzied and sometimes foolish ways to avoid this final consequence of sin.

Humans will work in frenzied and sometimes foolish ways to avoid this final consequence of sin.

However, we have a compassionate God! Throughout Scripture, He tells us repeatedly, and in varied ways, "Fear ye not"; "Fear not"; "Be not afraid" (see Exodus 14:13; Joshua 8:1).

This week's lesson focuses on fear as manifested in the disciples' experience with Jesus (see for example Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 4:36–41; 6:50, 51; Luke 8:25; 24:37). The author for each day's lesson helps us to understand what drove Jesus' disciples to fear, and to answer the question "How can we live as faithful followers of Jesus, and allow His presence to calm the storms raging around us?"

Fear is part of our human condition. But the fear of death doesn't have to hold us captive: The ultimate fear factor has an Ultimate solution.

Sunday
March 9

Growing From Fear to Faith

LOGOS

Matt. 14:22–33; Mark 4:36–41; 6:51, 52; Luke 8:25; 24:37; John 6:19

It's in Our Nature (Matt. 14:27)

"It is I, don't be afraid" (NIV) is recognition by Jesus that as human beings we are prone to fearfulness. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that our first parents, Adam and Eve, as a result of their disobedience, were fearful of God's presence (Gen. 3:8–10). The inherent quality of trust and confidence in God as a friend was, in one brief moment, stolen from them. Since then, it has been God's plan to rid us of this fear and to restore a relationship of mutual trust. This is based on what we allow God to do in our lives. Discipleship also has to do with the rebuilding of trust in a God who is not to be feared, but rather loved. Fear has denied us the deep appreciation of the power and majesty of God. When God spoke to Israel from

Mount Sinai (Exod. 20:18–20), the Hebrews trembled and withdrew from Him, preferring instead the human voice of Moses. God longs for a fearless relationship with us.

**The two cannot be married;
they cannot walk together.**

If He Has Done It Before, He Can Do It Again (Mark 4:36–41)

Jesus' mission was to reveal to us a God who was not to be feared but rather trusted. However, is it possible to trust someone or something that has not been proven to be trustworthy? In Mark 4:40, Jesus said to His disciples, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (NKJV). The NLT renders it "Why are you so afraid? Do you still not have faith in me?" This echoes a level of disappointment on the part of Jesus. It would appear that He was expecting His disciples to trust Him rather than fear Him. They earlier feared for their lives, and they now feared the power and authority demonstrated by Christ in calming the storm. Christ asked if they were still without faith. Evidently, they were previously given ample evidence that God was someone to be trusted. Spending time with Jesus means that one must develop confidence in Him. Discipleship means learning to trust a God who is proven to be trustworthy; and He does not expect us to trust Him without prior evidence of His trustworthiness.

It's One or the Other (Mark 4:40)

"How is it that you have no faith?" This rebuke to the ones He loves is a testimony from Jesus that fear and faith are incompatible. The two cannot be married;

they cannot walk together. Just as love and hate stand in opposition, so do faith and fear. Speaking of the ideal love relationship which God desires with us, the apostle John writes in 1 John 4:18, "Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us" (NLT).

Getting to Know Him (Matt. 14:28–30)

Discipleship involves getting to know the Master as a person. Knowing God and knowing His love brings peace to His followers. The assuring words from Jesus found in Matthew 14:27, "It is I; don't be afraid," were intended to bring comfort to a frightened soul. "It is I" implies the following: "You know Me, and you can trust Me. Therefore, there is no need to be afraid."

Peter demonstrated this well in Matthew 14:28–30. Having recognized Jesus, he was willing to trust Him enough to walk toward Him on the boisterous waves. When Jesus invited him to come, Peter fearlessly stepped out of the boat onto the water's surface. Learning to trust Jesus, His power and His love, is the key to developing true discipleship. The inevitable challenges of life need not cause fear and anxiety. Knowing His power and His love brings peace and casts out fear.

The apostle Paul's treacherous journey to Rome recorded in Acts 27 also illustrates the peace God wants His disciples to portray in the midst of turmoil. Once again, "Do not be afraid" (Acts 27:24) was the message from God, and while everyone on board the ship feared for their lives, Paul demonstrated faith in the power and love of God. "The apostle, though himself suffering physically, had words of hope for the darkest hour, a helping hand in every emergency. He grasped by faith the arm of Infinite Power, and his heart was stayed upon God. He had no fears for himself; he knew that God would preserve him to witness at Rome for the truth of Christ."*

Learning to trust rather than fear is true discipleship. Do we truly know the One who invites us to step out in faith and trust Him?

REACT

1. What evidence is there in your life that suggests you know Jesus?
2. What is the difference between presumption and faith?
3. How can one reconcile respect and fear?

**The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 442.

Monday
March 10

Resting in Him Before the Storm

TESTIMONY

John 5:30

When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of Almighty power. It was not as the “Master of earth and sea and sky” that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, “I can of Myself do nothing” (John 5:30, NKJV). He trusted in the Father’s might. It was in faith—faith in God’s love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.

As Jesus rested by faith in the Father’s care, so we are to rest in the care of our Savior. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help.

“How often the disciples’
experience is ours!”

“How often the disciples’ experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is

One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best.”*

REACT

1. How do we learn to trust Jesus when times are good?
2. What is implied by the statement that Jesus will deliver us “in the way that He knows to be best”?
3. Why is fear associated with unbelief?

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

Are We There Yet?

EVIDENCE

Heb. 13:8

Are we there yet?

The words may be annoying—a child's umpteenth whine—or a weary, heartfelt longing for the end of a seemingly everlasting journey.

The journey of discipleship is often similar. What does it mean to be a disciple? According to *Webster's New World Compact Desk Dictionary*, a disciple is "a pupil or follower of any teacher or school."

National Football League coach Dennis Erickson was fired two seasons into his five-year contract with the San Francisco 49ers. Instead of quitting football, he returned to Moscow, Idaho, to coach the Vandals, where Erickson had begun his head coaching career.

"Erickson talked endlessly about rebuilding the Vandals. About retiring with the Vandals. About teamwork."¹

One season later, Erickson ditched Idaho for the Pacific-10 Conference team at Arizona State University.

Howie Stalwick concludes: "Who could possibly believe this character now? Character. Wow! What a strange word to be connected with Erickson's name."²

His peace dissolves our
fears.

Life is filled with "Ericksons" recruiting support for earthly glory and gain. Distractions are many. But the path of Christian discipleship is not characterized by such fickleness. The One we follow is firm and unchangeable—"The same yesterday, today, and forever." "Help me, Lord, to daily grow more and more like Jesus!"³

No, we're not "there" yet; and there will be many delays. But the path is sure. His peace dissolves our fears. And we know the end of our journey is near.

1. "Erickson's betrayal a new low in career of disloyal coaching." Commentary by Howie Stalwick, a freelance sports writer in Post Falls, Idaho. Special to the Bozeman (Montana) *Daily Chronicle*, Dec. 11, 2006. Used by permission of the *Chronicle* editor.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "Like Jesus," *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, No. 492.

How to Build Trust

HOW-TO

Prov. 3:1-6

As a teen, I loved and hated the “trust walk” exercise we would do at student leadership camp. About a dozen of us would volunteer to be blindfolded, then form a single line, connected by placing our hands on the shoulders of the person in front of us. Then our coach would stand at a distance, giving us directions that would lead us through an obstacle course. To keep from stumbling or hitting our heads on a tree branch, we had to learn to do several things. These things are relevant to the process of discipleship:

1. *Follow directions immediately.* In the “trust walk,” it could save you a bump on the head or a bruised shin. In life, whenever I rely on my smarts or force my need for control, I end up lost. Trusting God requires surrender to His direction; and if I commit completely to God’s commands, I’ll reap the benefits (Prov. 3:1, 2, 5).

2. *Take good care of you teammates.* “Low branch coming!” “Step over the ditch!” We were always attentive to such urgings from our peers; and we were eager to pass them on to those behind us. As fellow “trust walkers,” it was good strategy to look out for each other. Likewise, disciples, by their care for one another, build a reputation that accentuates their trustworthiness (Prov. 3:3, 4).

“Thanks, Coach. I couldn’t have done it without you” was almost everyone’s sentiment.

3. *Give recognition to the coach.*

When we took off our blindfolds after the exercise, I was always glad to see the coach and that he was closer than I perceived. Sometimes he was actually spotting us and pulling branches out of the way. “Thanks, Coach. I couldn’t have done it without you” was almost everyone’s sentiment. Giving God the recognition for success in discipleship keeps us humble and focused. God relishes our worship, and as we acknowledge His role in our “trust walk,” we will see less of the obstacles and more of His plan (Prov. 3:6).

4. *Practice, practice, practice.* Perhaps it was redundant to do the “trust walk” at every leadership camp, but this repetition helped me to retain the skills I needed. The same is true of discipleship; our continual practice shows God’s refining our trust, placing Himself in the very heart of His disciples (Prov. 3:1, 3).

Fearing God Is to Hate Evil

OPINION

Prov. 8:13; Phil. 2:12, 13

When I was a youngster, I believed that the “fear of the Lord” meant to be afraid of God’s actions toward me. (Look at what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to Peter and died on the spot [Acts 5:1–9].) It wasn’t until adulthood that I came across a text that defined the “fear of the Lord.” Proverbs 8:13 says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (NKJV).

Now I really was challenged with the “fear of the Lord.” If I were to be honest, I didn’t always hate evil. Sometimes sin looked quite inviting. But to be a disciple of Christ, I needed to learn how to “hate evil,” and how to “fear the Lord.”

“Fearing God” or “hating evil” is a process and a product of discipleship. Abraham is an example of this. Out of fear for his own life, Abraham lied about his wife to the pharaoh. Many years later God tested Abraham’s faith with the command to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham’s fear for his own life had changed to a “fear of God.” Read Genesis 22:12. Abraham, a disciple of Christ, had learned to “fear God” and to be obedient.

“Fearing God” or “hating evil” is a process and a product of discipleship.

According to Kenneth Boa in *Conformed to His Image*, there are two extremes of discipleship. One extreme of “hating evil” is to emphasize our role and minimize God’s role. The other extreme is to overemphasize God’s role and minimize our role.* Philippians 2:12, 13, seems to pull these extremes and the “fear of the Lord” together. “*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose*” (NIV, emphasis added).

The “fear of the Lord” is a process (God’s work in us and our work to follow Him) and a product of choosing to walk with Christ on a daily basis.

REACT

1. What is the “Isaac” that you need to sacrifice?
2. How are you cultivating a “fear of the Lord”?

*Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 2001).

Friday
March 14

Fear of Love?

EXPLORATION

Job 33:4; Matt. 17:20; Rom. 12:2

CONCLUDE

Fear becomes an obstacle for most people in everyday occurrences. Most people are afraid of change because it creates a level of uncertainty. The experience of salvation and the Christian walk present such a fear because they have the power to transform us. Walking by faith in loyalty to God requires a lot of stumbling and “trembling” because love is both the means and the ultimate outcome.

CONSIDER

- Researching one of the Gospel writers: Mark, Matthew, Luke, or John. What particular hardships did they endure in order to follow Jesus? What different perspective do they bring to the element of discipleship?
- Compiling a list of phobias and finding a person who suffers from one of those phobias. How do individuals cope with these phobias?
- Comparing and contrasting in a Venn diagram people’s love of scary movies and thrilling roller coasters versus a Christian’s fear of God.
- Going to a nursery and asking for a mustard seed. Compare the size of the seed to an actual mountain or even a hill near your home. Reflect on Matthew 17:20.
- Sharing with a friend what your biggest fear is. Listen to their biggest fear and discuss ways to overcome these fears.
- Keeping a journal of the texts found in Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 4:36–41; 6:51, 52; Luke 8:25; 24:37. On the left side, list direct quotes from the Gospels. On the other side, write down your reactions with sentence starters such as: I wonder why . . . I suppose that . . . I am surprised that . . . etc.

CONNECT

James Coffin, *Before You Say Yes to Discipleship*, found at <http://adventistreview.org/article.php?id=291>; William G. Johnsson, *A Call for Radical Discipleship*, found at <http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=2006-1502&page=5>.

Mission and Co-mission



“He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day’ ”

(Luke 24:46, NIV).

Lord, What Is Your Mission for Me?

INTRODUCTION

Jer. 29:11

I first heard the Lord calling me to share His love with others when I was in high school, but I just wasn't sure what my mission was. I was, however, quite clear on what my mission was not: I was not going to marry a minister . . . because I'd turned away a seminary-bound boyfriend with that excuse earlier. I was never going to live in an "I" state, such as Illinois or Iowa . . . because the names sounded boring. And if I ever taught school (something I never honestly planned on doing), I was not going to teach middle school . . . because I was sure that students that age were worse than any "heathen" I'd read about in mission books.

My passion to serve drove me to pursue a degree in religion, and while at Andrews University, I fell in love with a man who had a similar passion. But he had chosen to be a minister. He also was the one God had chosen for me.

**Part of the Great
Commission is submission.**

When we talked of getting married, we wondered how we could financially stay afloat with both of us in college. We felt so blessed when the Lord confirmed our calling by having a conference president offer us a job—in Indiana.

And, if you are following the drift of my ramblings, you won't be at all surprised what my first job out of college was. Those middle school students were not the people I had planned on ministering to, but they were the ones the Lord had chosen for me!

Looking back, I believe it was important for the Lord to teach me early on that part of the Great Commission is submission. It is His work, not mine. It is His plan, not mine. It is His will, not mine. Each of us is like a piece in a giant jigsaw puzzle, that when completed, creates a mural of victory and peace—snapped together when all His children are finally home. I may think that I know where He needs me in this puzzle, but only He can pick me up and place me where the unique configuration of my life will fit together perfectly with the needs of another. Only He can see the box lid to the puzzle, where the final panorama is clearly displayed.

He says, "I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11, NIV).

What greater plan than the Great Commission? What greater hope than the blessed hope?

“Have You Owned the Commission?”

EVIDENCE

Matt. 28:18–20

The Great Commission is the term used to describe the final commandment of Christ to His apostles. It has become a tenet in Christian theology. The most familiar version of the Great Commission is recorded in Matthew 28:18–20, with other versions found in Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44–49, John 20:19–23, and Acts 1:4–8.

It was shortly after His resurrection and close to the time when He would return to heaven that Christ gave His brief yet specific commission to His disciples. It was something He had told them to do earlier in Matthew 10:5–42.

Matthew 28:18–20 states, “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age” (*The Message*).

The scope of this mandate can be divided into three steps. Step one is to take the gospel to the entire world, irrespective of class, color, or any other racial barriers. Step two is to baptize those who accept the message. The third step requires that new believers be settled into the faith through continuous instruction. It is sad to note that in fulfilling the commission, we often stop at step two. However, Christ expects that whomever we reap, we keep. Nurturing is therefore one of the identifying marks of making disciples.

**Christ expects that
whomever we reap, we
keep.**

“The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time.”¹ Consequently, “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!”²

In owning the commission, let us model Him in thoughts of love for all, words of truth and hope, actions of kindness and grace, Bible study with the lost and misguided, visits to the sick, lonely, depressed, and outcast, and prayers for and with souls in need. How is this modeling evident in your church and in your life?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

2. *Education*, p. 271.

Monday
March 17

Mission, Commission, and Co-Mission

LOGOS

Matt. 25:31–46; Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:36–53; John 3:14–19; Rom. 5:6–10; 1 Cor. 5:6, 7; 15:3, 4; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:22–25

Discipleship and Mission (Matt. 25:31–46)

Discipleship is not just a Christian concept. Every person is a disciple of someone. Whenever one wishes to be like another, she or he has become that person's disciple. Why, then, do some master teachers have a great effect on history long after they are dead? It is due to the work of their disciples. In the ruins of Pompeii, archaeologists have found a mosaic depicting two of history's greatest minds—Socrates and Plato. They are surrounded by their students—disciples. While their teachings are still studied today, neither man had the impact of Jesus. One reason is that they did not leave their followers with a clear mission and commission such as rang in the ears of Jesus' disciples when He left the earth.

Mission (John 3:14–19; Rom. 5:6–10; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:22–25)

Every person is a disciple of someone.

Jesus came to earth with a clearly defined mission—the salvation of humankind. He never lost sight of that goal. One of the first Bible verses most of us memorized, John 3:16, tells us that God gave Jesus to us so

that, believing on Him, we could have eternal life. This He did, according to Romans 5:6–10, while we were still separated from Him and totally undeserving. That shows how much He loves us! It was the story of this good news that Jesus told His disciples to spread everywhere.

Commission (Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:36–53; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4)

After His resurrection and before He ascended to heaven, Jesus left instructions that the story of His salvation mission should go to the whole world. What was the content of that story? We get further understanding from the post-Resurrection appearance in the upper room when Jesus gave the disciples a Bible study. He said, "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44, NIV). Then, He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. Read what He told them in Luke 24:44–47.

Not only had they witnessed these things personally, but Jesus also was asking them to be witnesses to other people about these things. This was their com-

mission. This is why, many years later, when Paul is talking about his message, he wrote: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3, 4, NIV).

The commission Christ left us with was to tell His simply wonderful and wonderfully simple story. It would seem that the church has been most vibrant when its members have focused on Christ. When we've lost that focus, we either take a slide into apostasy or become mired in legalism. Both extremes short-circuit the commission, and the work of Christ suffers.

Co-Mission (Luke 24:48-53; Matt. 28:18-20)

Jesus told His disciples in the upper room that they were to be His witnesses. Then He said, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49, NIV). This was a promise of the Holy Spirit that would fall ten days later on the Day of Pentecost. They were not to be left alone in their work, but they were to be coworkers in this co-mission. Luke wrote about this miraculous work in the book of Acts. Perhaps a better name for the book would be "The Acts of the Holy Spirit Through the Apostles."

In Matthew's recording of the giving of the gospel commission, Jesus starts out with these words: "'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'" (Matt. 28:18, NIV). The next word is *therefore*. It suggests a connection with what Jesus already has said—that all authority has been given to Him. The ability to do the task is based on Jesus' authority.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV). Then Jesus makes this promise: "'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'" (Matt. 28:20, NIV). Ours is a co-mission. What a wonderful privilege to be coworkers with Jesus.

"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it" (Mark 16:20, NIV). He is doing the same for His disciples today.

REACT

1. If we, as disciples, have been given such a wonderful message, and if we have the promise of Christ's presence, why are so many of us so reticent to share the good news?

2. How have we compromised the good news by adding other teachings?

Tuesday
March 18

“OK. Here’s the Plan” — Jesus

TESTIMONY

Mark 16:15

“Christ commissioned His disciples to do the work He had left in their hands, beginning at Jerusalem.”¹

“The disciples were to begin their work where they were. The hardest and most unpromising field was not to be passed by. So every one of Christ’s workers is to begin where he is. In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest.”²

“But the command, ‘Go ye into all the world,’ is not to be lost sight of. We are called upon to lift our eyes to the ‘regions beyond.’ Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference

between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field.”³

“It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister.

All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”⁴

“Instead of man’s speculations, let the word of God be preached. Let Christians put away their dissensions, and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them in faith ask for the blessing, and it will come.”⁵

REACT

1. In what practical ways may a parent fulfill Christ’s commission in their family?
2. With the world’s population expanding more quickly than Christianity is growing, how will Christ’s work be completed?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 820.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 822.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 823.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 822.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 827.

How to Commence Co-mission

HOW-TO

Matt. 28:16–20

There's an old song entitled "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off!" And there are days when that's my mantra. Days when I wonder if Jesus will ever come. Days when I'm amazed and horrified at the news reports. Days when I wonder . . . if He's counting on us, is it possible we'll never do what needs doing?

Somewhere along the way we need to quit playing church and really *do* what Jesus asks us to do! Consider these ideas:

1. Get a life! "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12, NIV). With Him, you have life—real life! Without Him, you have only an existence. You choose! Get real! Are we the "fake it 'til we make it" kind of Christians? There's a bumper sticker that says, "If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

If our Christian experience is so easy to hide, then is it real to begin with? If our theme song is "Hide It Under a Bushel, YES!" we've got a problem. Being real in an overwhelmingly phony world sure isn't easy, but a real person is an outstanding person. And a real person allows others to be real too! Realness makes an impression that creates openings for the gospel.

2. Get moving! Jesus said it plain and clear, "Therefore *go!*" (Matt. 28:19, NIV, italics supplied). Do something! Be active! Make a difference! Don't just sit there! And how could they have just sat there?! They watched a Guy die and then be raised to life again! THAT has to make some sort of really powerful impression. Sit there? Not them! Us? Now that's a different story! We're harder to impress. But have you seen any new Christians lately? We sort of don't know what to do with all their new-found enthusiasm. Is our general lack of action really linked to our lack of real conviction? When the magnitude of what Jesus has done for us really hits home, it's impossible to keep it to ourselves!

Don't just sit there!

REACT

1. Is it possible for the church (in the big, broad sense) to be active, but not individual members?

2. Why aren't we more excited about Jesus?

Hard-Core Discipleship

OPINION

Mark 16:14–20

In the spring of 2006, a British broadcaster traveled to the Philippines with a plan to be crucified on Good Friday. He pulled out at the last minute saying, “God wanted me only to pray at the foot of my cross.” He was joining a group of Christians who mark each Easter by reenacting the Crucifixion. They volunteer to be nailed to crosses with metal spikes the size of pencils. This event is known as *Karabrio*, and it takes place in the village of Cutud, 50 miles north of Manila. Sebastian Horsely, an oil painter, was the first Westerner to take part in *Karabrio*, but he did it for “artistic, rather than religious reasons.” He says, “This is very special to these people. It is something they do to get closer to God, not something that should be cheapened.”*

As a disciple of Jesus, what really is expected of us? I tend to think of people who go to extremes like those mentioned above as being . . . well . . . crazy. Hard-core at the very least. And while I applaud their sincerity, I cannot help but wonder if they should be more enthusiastic about replicating Jesus’ life rather than His death.

I don’t believe that God expects us to crucify ourselves annually or whip ourselves in order to pay for our sins. So what are the marks of a true disciple? Mark 16:14–20 comprises an impressive list. And, although I don’t think it’s necessarily a comprehensive list of discipleship traits, I think the most exciting part is the last. “The Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (NIV). So the signs of a true disciple are a heart fully committed to Him and a life that reflects His life—loving, kind, full of rock-solid integrity, and a servantlike attitude. When we accept His sacrifice and give ourselves to God in full, hard-core discipleship, He will work with us to bring others to Himself.

“This is very special. . . .”

REACT

1. Are you a “hard-core disciple” of Jesus? If not, why not?
2. Is it easier to live or die for Jesus? Explain your answer.

*TIMESONLINE. April 15, 2006. “God made me cancel my own crucifixion,” by Nico Hines. Retrieved November 17, 2006, from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article705815.ece>.

A Twofold Call

EXPLORATION

John 3:16; Gal. 2:20

CONCLUDE

Jesus' heart is for the world. When He finished His mission on earth and secured salvation for all who believe, He commissioned His followers to make disciples among all nations by baptizing and teaching. Fulfilling His commission means fulfilling both parts—leading people to Christ and teaching them how to walk with Him.

CONSIDER

- Interviewing some mature Christians on the difference between evangelism and discipleship. Share what you learn with your Sabbath School class and discuss how individually and as a group you could become stronger in each area.
- Composing a song or poem that expresses Jesus' longing to reach people who don't know Him.
- Writing out your personal testimony—your own experience with the gospel—so you can be ready to share it.
- Choosing three unbelievers you know and praying regularly for their salvation.
- Starting a weekly small group Bible study going through Bible study materials designed to help a Christian grow.
- Brainstorming with your Sabbath School class or other church group ways you can make contact with and reach out to your community. Then start trying out your ideas to increase local awareness of your church and what it has to offer.

CONNECT

Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*; Alice Fryling, *Disciple-Makers' Handbook*; Greg Laurie, *Discipleship: The Next Step in Following Jesus*; Ardis Dick Stenbakken and Carol Ferch-Johnson, *Bible Studies for Busy Women*.
Evangelism Resources Catalogue, www.adventistbookcenter.com.

Patterns of Discipleship



“ ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give’ ” (Matt. 10:8, NIV).

How to Imitate Jesus

INTRODUCTION

Matt. 25:31–46

In this era of globalization, there are many types of cellular phones. Every company tries to make the best product. Some types of these phones are more popular in some countries than in others. And many of them are quite expensive. Then there are new companies who imitate the most popular phones. It is difficult to tell the fake from the original. And often they are inferior to the original.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must be different. We must be originals, not fakes. He deserves our praise, because He has given us the true pattern of discipleship and because He doesn't keep this pattern a secret or make it hard to understand. The pattern is in the Bible for all to read. Furthermore, there is no superiority or inferiority when it comes to Christian discipleship. We are all the same in God. When we commit our lives to Christ, we all receive the same responsibility. That responsibility is to share God's love with each other in every area of daily life.

When Jesus returns, He will separate the sheep from the goats. As disciples of Jesus, we claim to be His sheep. But when He does come back, will He look at you and not know you because you did not share His love? A disciple is not a

disciple if he or she does not follow the teacher's instructions. We are not Christian disciples if we are not doing anything to share God's love. We'll be so glad when we hear the Son of Man say to us, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matt. 25:34, NIV).

This week, we will study how Jesus' disciples can share God's love. What role should compassion and forgiveness have in the life and ministry of His disciples? What model did Jesus give to us regarding how we should treat the marginalized, the outcast, and those from ethnic backgrounds different from our own? How can we be Christian disciples in every area of our daily life? What can we learn from Jesus about the centrality of prayer? Imitating Jesus is the focus of our study this week.

A disciple is not a disciple if he or she does not follow the teacher's instructions.

Enter Eternity Through Real Discipleship

LOGOS

Matt. 14:14; Mark 1:41; Luke 16:19–31; 2 Cor. 13:5

The Cost of Discipleship (2 Cor. 8:1–5)

Christian discipleship is not without its cost. The cost of discipleship mandates the investment of effort, labor, treasure, and time in the service of our Lord and Savior. This is accomplished when Christians first give themselves fully to the Lord as the Macedonians did (2 Cor. 8:1–5). Furthermore, one is not a fruitful disciple without actively assisting in spreading the teachings of Christ (Mark 16:15; Acts 8:4). True discipleship is maintained by faithful service (1 Cor. 15:58) and is governed by the authority of Christ alone (John 8:31). It should be a habitual part of life (Luke 6:46). Discipleship does not simply happen. It is learned (Heb. 5:12–6:2; 1 Pet. 2:2). The basis upon which Christian discipleship is built must be an intense familiarity with Christ and His Word. This familiarity occurs as the result of earnestly studying the Bible (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15) and imitating Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21).

As real disciples of Christ, compassion and forgiveness should play a major role in our discipleship.

The Transformation Process (Romans 12; Eph. 4:11–16).

Discipleship requires a specific strategy to move a new believer from being a babe in Christ to a mature believer. This is a transformative process.

Christian discipleship is more than believing a set of doctrines. It also includes allowing Jesus to be Lord of your life and obeying Him. This type of discipleship allows God's image to be re-created in you. Once we make a decision for Christ, then just like Andrew, John, and Peter (John 1:35–42), we must become His disciples and follow Him. Have you chosen to follow Christ? If so, then you are a modern-day Christian disciple!

Starter Kit (Matt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34)

The pattern of Christian discipleship begins when you make an active choice to know Jesus better. The "starter kit" of the discipleship pattern is accomplished in several ways:

1. *Study His Word daily and spend time alone with Him in prayer.* Follow Jesus' example, "The Majesty of heaven, while engaged in His earthly ministry, prayed

much to His Father. He was frequently bowed all night in prayer. . . . All night, while His followers were sleeping, was their divine Teacher praying. The dew and the frost of night fell upon His head bowed in prayer. His example is left for His followers.”¹

2. *Become a member of a Bible-teaching church fellowship.* As disciples, God calls us to do many things: spread the gospel, minister to the outcast and the needy, make disciples, etc. And this should be happening in every nation around the world (Matt. 28:19, 20). Share what you are learning about Christ with others, just like the original disciples and apostles. “The work of soul-saving must be carried on in the way that Christ has marked out. . . . Only by obeying this word can we be His disciples.”²

3. *Seek out the companionship of other Christians who are growing in Christ.* Participate in ministry and meet the needs of other believers. As real disciples of Christ, compassion and forgiveness should play a major role in our discipleship (Matt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34).

4. *Show Christian conduct before all people.* What can you do to reach the ostracized and marginalized people of society? (Luke 16:19–31; 18:9–14.) Because Jesus came to die for the sins of every human being, it makes sense that on earth, He would therefore minister to everyone who would be ministered to. Regarding discrimination, our Great Master has taught us that God has made all humanity “one blood” (Acts 17:26, NKJV). We are all offspring of Adam and Eve, our first parents. By Christ’s death on the cross and through faith in Him, we all—regardless of color, nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion—can become the “children of God” (John 1:12, NRSV).

5. *Examine your personal discipleship continually.* “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5, NIV). By God’s grace, is Christ living in you?

REACT

1. How can you help your local church members better understand that the work of discipleship is the work of every church member?

2. What do you think a church should do in order to successfully make disciples?

1. *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 167.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 239, 240.

“He Is Our Sufficiency”

TESTIMONY

Matt. 14:14

“By faith we are to lay hold on a living God, and maintain an experience that shall breathe love, tenderness, kindness, compassion, and affection. These traits of character are the fruit that the Lord Jesus desires us to produce, and to present before the world as a witness that we have a Saviour who can uplift and who can satisfy.”¹

“The unselfish labor of Christians in the past should be to us an object lesson and an inspiration. The members of God’s church are to be zealous of good works, separating from worldly ambition and walking in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good. With hearts filled with sympathy and compassion, they are to minister to those in need of help, bringing to sinners a knowledge of the Saviour’s love. Such work calls for laborious effort, but it brings a rich reward. Those who engage in it with sincerity of purpose will see souls won to the Saviour, for the influence that attends the practical carrying out of the divine commission is irresistible.”²

Many people today are living in poverty and sickness. They don’t need to be judged; rather they need to receive compassion, help, and hope for salvation.

“The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner’s soul. . . .”

“Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God’s pardoning grace. In God’s forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner’s soul, and from him to the souls of others. The tenderness and mercy that Christ has revealed in His own precious life will be seen in those who become sharers of His grace.”³

REACT

1. What are the common obstacles that prevent us from showing compassion to people who are different from us?
2. Why do you think compassion is important to being a good disciple?

1. *Our High Calling*, p. 144.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

3. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 251.

The Other Lizard

EVIDENCE

1 John 3:11–19; Isaiah 58

There was a man who was renovating his house. When he tore down one of the walls, he discovered a lizard that had been “living” behind it. However, the lizard’s foot was stuck to a letter which also somehow had found its way into the wall. This prevented the lizard from moving about. Even more astounding was the fact that the date on the letter indicated it had been in the wall for ten years.

How could this lizard stay alive all this time? the man pondered.

Finally, one day the mystery was solved. The man observed another lizard with food in its mouth approaching the “imprisoned” lizard. This second lizard was bringing the food for the trapped lizard to eat.¹

To think that for ten years the one lizard would bring food to the other lizard stuck in the wall. To think that even in the animal kingdom, such devotion—and dare we speculate love—could occur!

How many people on earth are like the lizard stuck in the wall? For any number of reasons, they are starving for the love of Christ. How can God’s love be in us if we do not come to their aid? In fact, that we do offer them help is proof of our discipleship.

Finally, one day the mystery was solved.

“Seldom will believers be called upon to experience martyrdom for another. However, every day they will face needy people whom they ought to be willing to help if they have the resources to do so; most people have more than they need. This parallels James’s teaching (James 2:14–17): Believers should be willing to help a *brother or sister in need*. Believers should respond to God’s love for them by loving others, putting others’ needs before their ownership of *the world’s goods*.”²

REACT

1. How can you be more like the second lizard?
2. Why can you not be a disciple of Christ if you do not help those who are in need? See 1 John 3:23, 24.

1. Chandra Suwondo, *50 Renungan yang Membawa Berka (50 Devotionals Which Bring Blessings)*, pp. 171–173.

2. Grant Osborne, general editor, *Life Application Bible Commentary: 1, 2, and 3 John* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), pp. 76, 77, emphasis added.

How to Be Green Forever

HOW-TO

Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Eph. 6:18

As Jesus' disciples, we are like newly planted seeds just beginning to sprout. We must nourish our relationship with Him in order to remain His disciples, in order to remain forever green. If we do not, our relationship with Him will die.

But maintaining our discipleship relationship with Jesus is not always easy, for Satan makes every effort to mislead God's disciples in all areas of their faith (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, it is crucial for Jesus' disciples to receive a daily supply of the Holy Spirit's power to help them in this struggle. The Holy Spirit can help us pray each time the spiritual forces of evil attempt to gather around us. Calling upon the name of Jesus in prayer is essential to successful discipleship. "Prayer is the key that unlocks faith in our lives. Effective prayer needs both an attitude—complete dependence—and an action—asking. Prayer demonstrates our reliance on God

as we humbly invite him to fill us with faith and power. There is no substitute for prayer, especially in circumstances that seem impossible." *

What can we do so prayer can effectively nurture our discipleship growth? Here are a few steps:

**"There is no substitute
for prayer. . . ."**

1. Pray to overcome temptation (Gen. 3:1–6).
2. Instead of worrying, pray (Gen. 32:9–12).
3. Balance your prayers with action (Exod. 14:15).
4. Pray even if God seems far away (Ps. 10:1).
5. Pray for others as well as for yourself (Ps. 122:6–9).
6. Find time to pray every day (Mark 1:35).
7. Pray always, never giving up (Luke 18:1–8).
8. Pray in God's will (1 John 5:14, 15).

REACT

1. What does Luke 18:9–14 teach us about prayer?
2. How can you manage time so you can pray more?

* *Life Application Study Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991), p. 1752.

Disciples

OPINION

Mark 1:16, 17; Luke 5:1–11

Most students around the world have an identity card that lists their name, age, information about their work status, etc. But what about all of the students enrolled in the University of the Kingdom of God (UKG)?

To answer this question, let's take a look at how Jesus trained His students—His disciples. When He lived on this earth, He chose fishermen and tax collectors to be His students. These people were not high on the social ladder of their time. This teaches us that even the most humble of people can enroll in UKG if they so desire. He wanted to train them to become like Him and to draw others to Him (Mark 1:16, 17).

What were classes like at UKG back then? Jesus used nature (Matt. 6:25–34), parables (Luke 15), and real-life occurrences (Luke 5:1–11) to get His point across. And the subjects He taught included the following:

1. prayer (Matt. 6:5–13),
2. evangelism (Luke 9:1–6),
3. mental health (Matt. 6:25–34),
4. how to help other people (Matt. 6:1–4),
5. how to have good relationships with others (Matt. 5:38–48),
6. how to have a good relationship with God (John 15:1–8),
7. the Holy Spirit (John 16:1–15), and
8. God's love (John 15:9–17).

How well do we understand these subjects? Today, Jesus is calling you to be His disciple. Will you enroll in the University of the Kingdom of God? What will your student identity card say about you?

REACT

1. Use a concordance to discover other subjects Jesus taught (and still teaches) at UKG.
2. What other texts can you find to correspond with the subjects listed above?

What were classes like at
UKG back then?

Friday
March 28

Follow the Master's Plan

EXPLORATION

Gal. 6:9, 10

CONCLUDE

There is a cost to discipleship. The first step is setting aside time each day to study Jesus' life, His relationships, and His methods of working. Next, ask what He would have you do with your life. Finally, you must be willing to go and do—no matter what it is, to whom it will be done, what it will cost, or how difficult it is. The reward is greater than the sacrifice.

CONSIDER

- Finding and memorizing a hymn or praise song that will encourage you to follow Jesus' plan for your discipleship. Sing it whenever you need encouragement to go and do.
- Organizing a plan for your life that will give you the time you need to study and pray.
- Doing a random act of kindness to someone you do not know well at least twice a week.
- Making some puzzles or writing a story about how much Jesus loves children and take it to your local hospital and give it to a child.
- Organizing a small group to visit a handicapped home and spend time with the residents. Find out what some of their needs are and make a plan to supply what you can.
- Offering to do a scrapbook, frame pictures, or otherwise organize memorabilia for an older person.
- Offering to help out at a shelter for immigrants, homeless, or other needy people.

CONNECT

Steps to Christ.

Joel Osteen, *Your Best Life Now*, pt. 1; Charles R. Swindoll, *So, You Want to Be Like Christ?* pp.169–188.

Next Quarter's Lessons

The Wonder of Jesus

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 2008, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: Who Was Jesus?

Logos: Matt. 16:13–16; John 20:26–28; 1 Cor. 1:18–27; 15:3–7.

Memory Text: “When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’” (Matt. 16:13, NIV).

From the earliest days of His ministry, there was discussion and debate about Jesus. How interesting that those discussions continue, even today. They began with the people of His own times and from His own town. “‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’ they asked. ‘Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary . . .?’” (Matt. 13:54, 55, NIV).

Who, indeed, was Jesus? Why was He confused with other prominent Jewish characters? What were the challenges to Jesus’ integrity and identity in the centuries following the New Testament era? How convinced were the Bible writers of His identity, and why? These are some of the questions that our first week’s lesson will examine.

Lesson 2: The Mystery of His Deity

Logos: Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 16:13–17; John 1:1, 14, 18; 8:58; 17:5; 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14.

Memory Text: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1–3, NIV).

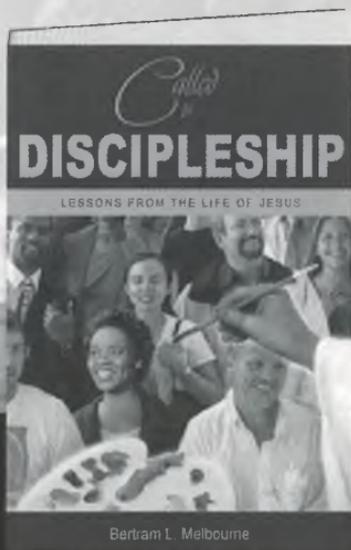
Leaving the historical overview, we come to the Scriptures themselves. We want to see what they tell us about Jesus, whose life has commanded so much attention through the centuries. As we do so, we ought to keep in mind the crucial exchange between Jesus and His disciples at Caesarea Philippi. Upon hearing Peter’s confession of Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus reminded him that this insight did not spring from human investigation, but was disclosed “by my Father in heaven” (Matt. 16:17, NIV).

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