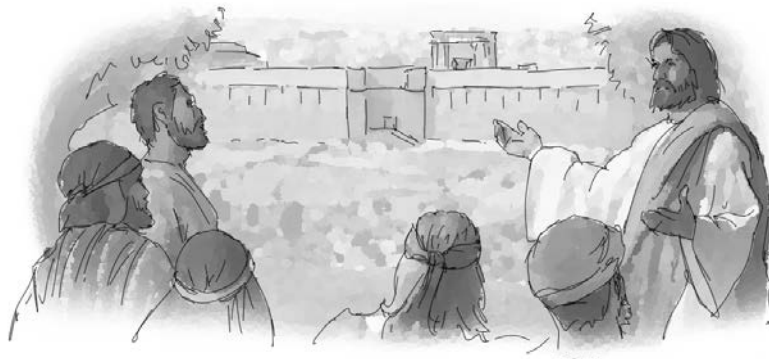


# Discipling<sup>1</sup> Spiritual Leaders



## SABBATH—MARCH 8

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Luke 6:12–16; John 16:7–14; Luke 6:20–49; Jeremiah 50:31; Isaiah 57:15; Acts 1.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “On one of those days, Jesus went out to a mountain-side to pray. He spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called for his disciples to come to him. He chose 12 of them and made them apostles [leaders and teachers]” (Luke 6:12, 13, NIV).

**JESUS WAS ALWAYS ACTIVE IN MAKING DISCIPLES.** But He knew that His stay on earth would be short. So, He dedicated (devoted) Himself to the training of disciples so that they could continue the work after He left. He was both their Master Teacher and their Master Trainer. Teaching and training are clearly connected here. *Teaching* usually means sharing knowledge with others. But here, *training* means that disciples become ready for their work through practice and discipline.

The disciples' preparation for leadership certainly meant that they received knowledge. But their spiritual growth was more important. The disciples needed an experience in the things of God, of faith, of hardship, of holy living, and of self-sacrifice. They needed this experience to go with an understanding and a knowledge of doctrine (church beliefs) and theology (the study of God). Knowledge alone was not enough preparation for the tough challenges ahead. Jesus gave them both.

<sup>1</sup> discipling—leading others to Christ.

**SUNDAY—MARCH 9****LEADERSHIP STARTS HERE  
(Luke 6:12–16)**

Christ's time on earth was rather short. So, the training of disciple-makers was a must. Whom should He select (choose)? How many should He choose? Jesus had hundreds of disciples. Should everyone undergo (go through) large group education? But Christ understood that leadership is better developed within small groups, not large ones. Limited numbers would be chosen for Christ's first graduating class.

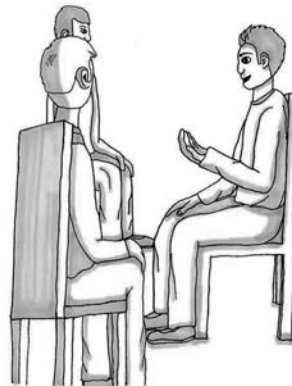
**Study Luke 6:12–16. What does Jesus do before He chooses His disciples? Why is this so important?**

Planning well requires great wisdom. Jesus came to His heavenly Father in prayer to get this wisdom. In the same way, prayer should take place before choosing candidates for disciple-making in the twenty-first century. If Christ believed that He needed much prayer in order to get the needed wisdom, how much more should today's Christians pray for divine wisdom when choosing the people to be responsible for supervising the progress of the great command?

Jesus chose twelve people to be apostles (teachers and leaders). They were His chosen representatives and were given spiritual authority. The larger group of disciples witnessed

this ordination<sup>2</sup> without any jealousy or negative feelings. Later, Jesus would choose a larger group of seventy-two and, perhaps, He also chose others who were not written about in the Bible. But the twelve apostles were the ones most closely connected with Jesus. They accepted the largest responsibilities, and they required the greatest training. This arrangement clearly suggests the organized set-up among the earliest Christians. Christ trained the leaders within that set-up to make them ready for their given tasks.

**Think about how much time Jesus spent in prayer. What should this tell us about our own prayer lives? What does prayer do to you?**



**Jesus knew that leadership is best developed in small groups.**

**MONDAY—MARCH 10****KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE:  
PART 1 (John 16:7–14)**

Information was a very important part

2. ordination—a ceremony for authorizing (giving power to) a person or group to do a special work for God. A person is ordained by the laying on of hands.

of Jesus' message. Information alone cannot change a person. But every change includes information. Certainly, ideas have no power in themselves to cause change. But God's Spirit works through human hearts and makes the change necessary for conversion.<sup>3</sup>

**Read John 16:7–14. What is Jesus saying here that helps us to understand how knowledge plays a small part in our understanding and experience of what true Christianity really means?**

When biblical knowledge works with God's Spirit, it can change persons and societies. The disciple-maker must work hard for both people and societies—in faith and study.

Christianity highly values intelligence, thinking, and imagination. The proof of reasoned thought throughout the Bible, the great respect for teachers within Judaism, and the careful attention of scribes (writers) in protecting and preserving holy writings all point to how important knowledge is.

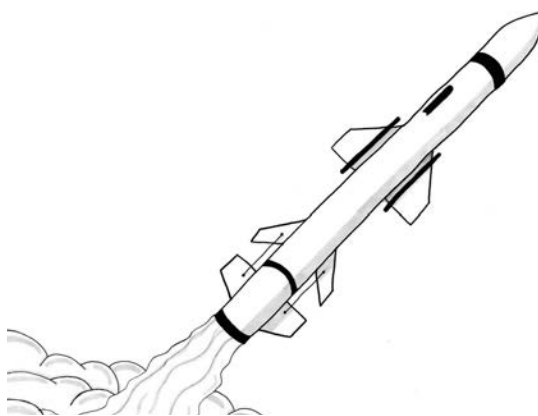


**Too often emotion and religious excitement become the false measuring stick of how good a person is spiritually.**

Christianity is not an imaginary faith. But certain elements or groups within Christianity believe strong feelings and experiences are more important than knowledge. This mind-set (way of thinking) says that what people believe is not as important as what they experience. Instead, emotion and religious excitement become the measuring stick of how good a person is spiritually.

But the Bible does not agree with this idea. Experience without knowledge becomes a supercharged missile without true direction. But knowledge without experience becomes lifeless. And it often becomes legalistic,<sup>4</sup> too. True Christian leaders understand the need to develop both knowledge and experience in making disciples of believers.

**Think through all the good reasons that you have for your faith. At the same time, what part does experience play in your religious life? Why do we need both?**



**Experience without knowledge becomes a supercharged missile without true direction.**

3. conversion—a change in a person's beliefs and lifestyle for the better.

4. legalistic—having to do with a belief that a person can be saved by obeying the law.

**TUESDAY—MARCH 11****KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE:  
PART 2 (Luke 6:20–49)**

**Read Luke 6:20–49. In what ways are both knowledge and experience shown in these verses? How are they combined (joined together) to show why they are needed, both in our own walk with the Lord and in disciple-making, too?**

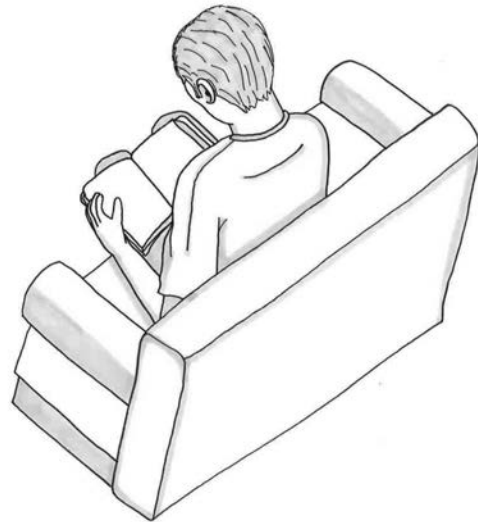
Spiritual knowledge is necessary for spiritual change. Christ Himself was known as the Master Teacher. In nature, with seashores and mountains all around, Christ shared life-changing knowledge with people. The Holy Spirit awakened the people's hearts and minds so that they could accept these truths. Disciple-making is not complete without experience. But experience *must* be controlled by knowledge.

Today's disciple-makers *must* know the Bible very well. This is because the Bible offers true spiritual information. In the same way, the disciple-makers should share doctrine (church beliefs) and teachings with others, no matter how unpopular or difficult some ideas may be. God does not want experienced believers to hold back some information. He wants new believers to grow and appreciate the wonderful, life-changing truths of Christianity. This is especially true of the present truth of the three angels' messages.

**What does Jesus say in Luke 6:39 that everyone who tries to**

**make disciples must remember? How can we be sure that we are not like the example that Jesus is warning about here?**

In the end, knowledge and experience together can make unselfish love the most powerful force that any disciple-maker can have.



Spiritual knowledge is necessary for spiritual change.

**WEDNESDAY—MARCH 12****THE EARLY LEADERS  
(Zephaniah 2:3)**

It is very interesting to note that Jesus picked leaders from among the humbler, less-educated class of people. Christ did not choose the learned or wise leaders of the Sanhedrin.<sup>5</sup> Ignoring the self-righteous (proud) teachers, Jesus chose humble, unlearned men to preach the truths that were to move the world. He planned to train and educate these men as the leaders of His church.

5. Sanhedrin—a governing council of Jewish leaders.

Then they would educate others and send them out with the gospel message: “They were given the power of the Holy Spirit so that they might have success in their work. The gospel was not to be preached by human power or human wisdom but by the power of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 17.

**What do Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 11:29; Jeremiah 50:31; and Isaiah 57:15 tell us about why Christ chose the ones He did to lead His church instead of those who might have had better abilities and talents needed for leadership?**

We must be careful not to make wrong guesses about why Jesus chose the leaders that He did. Jesus was not against the educated or learned class. At a young age, He Himself showed much knowledge (Luke 2:46, 47). It is true that often those with the most education, wealth, or power are not ready to humble themselves enough for the Lord to be able to use them. But this is not always true. For example, the Lord did use such men (think of Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea; read also Acts 6:7). It just means that often the more talented ones are not open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:19 and Philipians 2:3. What traits<sup>6</sup> are shown**

**here? Why are these traits so important, not just for a leader but for anyone who claims to be a Christian? How can we learn to have these traits in our own lives?**

## THURSDAY—MARCH 13

### WHAT JESUS LEFT (Acts 1)

Later generations often talk about the success of past efforts (work). Whenever those efforts lead to good results, the principles (important rules) of these efforts should be studied and copied. So, did Christ’s disciple-making methods lead to good results? Of course they did. His methods changed the world. None of us would be reading this Bible study guide more than 2,000 years later if Christ had not been successful in training the early church leaders.

**Read Acts 1. What does this first chapter in the beginning of the early church show us about the need for God-chosen leaders? What were its members searching for in a leader? (Read verse 22.) What can we learn from this need as we search for the right leaders?**

Jesus established His kingdom and showed the principles that would spark its growth. Pioneering the pathway through darkness to sunrise, Christ chose leaders whose weaknesses were “covered” by His strength

6. traits—qualities of character (who someone is), such as being smart, honest, or faithful.

because they completely depended upon Him. They were looked down upon by religious leaders who thought they were unlearned. But they outshined the Pharisees because they were humble and dependent on God's leading. (How important it is for all of us to show such traits!) Additionally, over time, those who had good education and high social standing became part of the church.

"As Christ's representatives, the apostles were to make a strong impression on the world. The fact that they were humble men would not lessen their influence but make it grow. This is because the minds of their hearers would be carried from them to the unseen Savior, who was still working with them. The wonderful teaching of the apostles, their words of courage and trust, would lead people to believe that it was not in their own power that they worked. Instead, it was in the power of Christ."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 22, 23.

**What do you want your church leaders to be like? Why? What are the top three traits that you want them to have? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath and compare<sup>7</sup> answers.**

### FRIDAY—MARCH 14

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, "The First Evangelists,"<sup>8</sup> pages 349–358; "The Last Journey

From Galilee," pages 488–496; and "The Sermon on the Mount," pages 298–314, in *The Desire of Ages*; "The Training of the Twelve," pages 17–24; "The Great Commission," pages 25–34; and "The Seven Deacons," pages 87–96, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

"All through the field of Christ's work there were souls who woke up to their own need. They were hungering and thirsting for truth. The time had come to send the news of His love to these hungry hearts. To all these the disciples were to go as His representatives. The believers would be led to look upon them as God-chosen teachers. So when the Savior should thus be taken to heaven from them, the believers would not be left without qualified teachers.

"On this first tour the disciples were to go only where Jesus had been before them, and had made friends. Their preparation for the journey was to be very simple. Nothing must take their minds from their great work, or excite enemies and close the door for further work."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 351.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In class, discuss your answer to Thursday's final question. What can you learn from one another's answers?

7. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

8. evangelists—preachers who travel from place to place, spreading the gospel.

② Read Acts 6:1–6. Why does the event here show one of the reasons for why the church needs good leaders?

③ Think more deeply about this idea of a balance between experience and knowledge in the Christian life. Is it possible that different people need different balances? If so, how can we learn to be sensitive to

these differences in our efforts to make disciples? How can we learn that perhaps what we need is not exactly what others will need? Also, look at this verse: “The Jews require miraculous signs. Greeks look for wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:22, NIV). How does this verse show the differences between knowledge and experience?