

Disciples¹ From Different Nations



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 15:21–28; Luke 7:1–11; John 1:3; Acts 10:28, 34, 35; Acts 11:25–30.

MEMORY VERSE: “To those who are weak I became weak. That was to win the weak” (1 Corinthians 9:22, NlrV).

JIM RECEIVED A CALL TO TAKE THE GOSPEL (THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS) TO A FOREIGN COUNTRY. Upon arrival, he discovered that the people had a test for foreigners to earn the right to stay among them. The foreigner had to swallow, and not vomit, a terrible-tasting drink. If the person failed the test, he or she had to leave quickly. If the person did not leave quickly, he or she could be eaten by the tribe. Jim watched the tribe prepare the drink of milk, human saliva, blood, chewed-up herbs, and other things mixed with herbs. It looked and smelled sickening. All he could do was pray—and drink. To everyone's surprise (especially his own), Jim drank it and held it down. He earned the right to remain.

Making disciples might require us to do strange things. We might have to eat strange food or drink terrible-tasting drinks so that we can win some people to Jesus. This is the call and challenge of discipleship. This is because the gospel goes around the world and into cultures² sometimes very different from our own.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT): What other examples do we have of Jesus working with others besides Jews? Who were the God-fearers? What can we learn from them about discipleship?³ What can we learn today from the Antioch model (example) of discipleship?

1. disciples—people who accept and obey Christ.

2. cultures—the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and ways of life of certain people at certain times.

3. discipleship—the practice of accepting Jesus and following Him.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 3**DISCIPLES AMONG THE SAMARITANS⁴ (John 4:39–42)**

What can we learn about God's attitude (feeling) toward all races and people from John 1:3; Acts 10:28, 34, 35; Acts 17:26–28; Hebrews 2:9?



The fact that Christ's death was for everyone shows how much God hates prejudice.

The Bible is clear: Christ created people and died for them all too. It does not matter if the people are of different races, nations, or areas of the world. The fact that Christ's death was for every human should show us how God hates prejudice.⁵

It is no wonder then, that when Jesus was here, He ministered (helped) not just to the Jews but to non-Jews, as well. Though Paul is understood to be the apostle (preacher) to the Gentiles,

Jesus was already witnessing to them when He was on the earth.

What do John 4:39–42 and Luke 17:11–16 tell us is happening? What message should we learn from these verses?

Last week's lesson showed that the woman at the well left her water pots. She went to town to invite the villagers to meet Jesus after He had told her everything she ever did. She even announced that Jesus was the Messiah. The Bible says that many of the villagers believed because of the woman's testimony. When the villagers met Jesus, they encouraged Him to stay. They hoped that he would teach them.

The story of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–16) also speaks about Jesus' work for Samaritans. The tenth leper, who returned to give thanks, was a Samaritan. By praising God in a loud voice, the Samaritan gave his thanks for what Jesus had done for him. Jesus told this Samaritan that his faith had made him well. The Greek word used for this healing suggests the idea of being saved. This suggests that the Samaritan's faith had saved him both physically and spiritually. Jesus also called the Samaritan a foreigner. But He did not turn this man away because of that. Instead, He rewarded the Samaritan's faith. These

4. Samaritans—people from Samaria. When the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the invaders from the north, many Jews intermarried with non-Jews among the invaders and settled in the area called Samaria, north of the southern kingdom of Judea. They were known as the Samaritans.

5. prejudice—an opinion or feeling already formed against someone or something before hearing both sides of the issue; pre-judged ideas.

experiences show that Jesus did not follow the prejudices of His time.

Saying that we should not have prejudice against anyone is one thing. But it is another story to be free of these poisonous (evil) emotions. What useful steps can you take to help remove prejudice from your own heart?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 4

THE GOD-FEARERS (Luke 7:1–11)

In the first century, some Gentiles (non-Jews) were called God-fearers. They nominally accepted Judaism (the Jewish religion), made gifts to synagogues (Jewish churches), and attended Sabbath services. They did not take part in baptism or accept all the Jewish rules for religion. One such God-fearer was the centurion⁶ of Luke 7:1–11.

From the verses in Luke 7:1–11, what can we learn about the faith and character⁷ of this Gentile disciple?

For Jesus, the faith of this centurion “was an important part of the work which the gospel was to accomplish among the Gentiles. With joy Jesus looked forward to the gathering of souls from all nations to His kingdom.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 317.

Acts 10 mentions another Roman official. Cornelius was a faithful God-fearer and a centurion. He was very kind to the poor and prayed hard to God. God sent an angel to inform Cornelius that He accepted his gifts and prayers and sent him in search of Peter. Peter went to his home, even though this was against Jewish rules. And Peter was scolded for it. But God told Peter not to call common or unclean those, like Cornelius, whom He had cleansed.

Peter was preaching to Cornelius’s family and servants (Acts 10:44–46). The Holy Spirit interrupted (stopped) Peter’s preaching with the Gentile Pentecost.⁸ This came as a surprise to the Jewish followers of Jesus.



The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius’s family and servants while Peter preached. Like Peter, we must not reject those whom God has accepted.

How did the Jewish followers of Jesus feel about the situation in Acts 11:1–3? What makes their actions so shocking to us today?

6. centurion—a leader in the Roman army who had more or less than 100 soldiers under his command.

7. character—who you are; all the things a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of. Your character is the sum of choices you make such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

8. Pentecost—Outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers.

What message can we learn from their actions?

Jewish believers were the followers of Jesus. But they failed to understand the full meaning of the gospel. How careful we should be not to let any cultural, educational, or social influences⁹ prevent us from following the principles (rules) of Christ. As disciples of Christ, we are to live to the fullest the principles of Christian beliefs.

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 5

THE CANAANITE¹⁰ (Matthew 15:21–28)

At one point in His ministry (work), Jesus escaped to the regions of Tyre and Sidon for some rest. He had to get out of town because of problems with the leaders. In this Gentile territory, Jesus entered a house but did not want anyone to know it (Mark 7:24). But a Canaanite woman soon found Him.

Answer the following questions from Matthew 15:21–28:

1. Why did the woman call Jesus “Son of David,” which was a title of the Messiah? What did that suggest about her knowledge of Jesus?

2. How did Jesus’ disciples act toward her? Why was that usual of them?

3. What kind of favor did the woman ask? How helpless is she?

4. What things happened that should have discouraged her but did not?

The woman came from a hated nation that had been a long-time enemy of Israel. At first, she was ignored by Jesus. Christ’s own words to the woman seemed rough. But despite the attitude of the disciples, the woman knew that Jesus was her only hope. Perhaps it was a stubbornness born out of her helpless feeling. Who knows? But in the end, we are all just as dependent upon Christ.

Jesus also has a powerful lesson for His own disciples. Christ’s purpose was to teach them about the need to work for non-Jews. He did this by acting out the opposite of His normal attitude (feeling). These Twelve had a lot to learn about what it meant to be disciples.

Go over the verses about this woman. What can we learn from her attitudes, actions, words, and faith that can make us better disciples?

9. influences—persons or things that have the power to affect or change other persons or things.

10. Canaan—territory or nations around Israel; a Canaanite was a person living in the area of Canaan.



The Canaanite woman knew that Jesus was her only hope.

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 6

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN¹¹ LEADER (Acts 8:26–40)

One of the most interesting stories about discipleship is in Acts 8:26–40. It is the story of Philip and the eunuch.¹²

Read the whole story in Acts 8:26–40 and answer the following questions:

1. What clues (examples) show us that this man already had some knowledge of truth and was looking for more?

2. How did the Bible help him become a disciple?

3. What did Philip say that helped this man be ready for baptism?

4. What can we learn about discipleship from Philip in this story? What did Philip show that made him such a good witness for the Lord?

In this story, God played a powerful part. After obeying the angel, Philip met the eunuch on the road. It is interesting to notice that Philip was to go from Jerusalem to Gaza. (What does this symbolize?¹³)

The Ethiopian was another God-fearer. He was reading Isaiah 53, which is the greatest prophecy about the Messiah. This chapter describes a picture of Christ's death for us. Then, after Philip explained to him the meaning of the Chapter 53, they came to a pool of water. And the eunuch wanted to be baptized. God planned everything to happen at the right time and place!

Acts 8:39 describes that the eunuch went on his way and was very happy. He had delivered the good news about Jesus' death on the cross for his sins. We say that faith is not feeling. This is because we need to keep faith strong even when we feel bad. At the same time, why should we not, as forgiven disciples, keep our hearts happy no matter what happens to us in our daily life? After all, Christ died to have our sins forgiven.

11. Ethiopian—a citizen of an African country named Ethiopia.

12. eunuch—a servant whose testes (male sex organs) had been removed so that he could not have sexual desire when working with a woman.

13. symbolize—to make an object, mark, sign, or person stand for or represent another subject, idea, or some other thing.

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 7**THE ANTIOCH CHURCH
(Acts 11:25–30)**

Christians were attacked after Stephen was stoned to death. And Saul (Paul) of Tarsus, before he was converted (born again), chased after them. This forced the gospel to spread. Among the places it went was Antioch in Syria. This is where the first church for Gentiles started. Luke says that the Lord was with this movement and that “large numbers [many] of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21, NIV). The church grew so fast that the Jerusalem leaders sent Barnabas to help them.

Upon his arrival, Barnabas got the help of Saul (Paul) of Tarsus for this discipleship mission. This helped the church to grow and made it become mission-minded.

What were the issues in Acts 11:25–30? How did the church answer? What lessons can we learn from this story for our mission today?

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Antioch, they taught many people for a year. What should that tell us about how important it is to teach discipleship?

Acts 13:1–3 shows more about the makeup of the early church. We know that Barnabas was a Cypriot Jew. Saul came from Tarsus, another city that was not part of Israel. Manaen was

either a good friend or foster brother of Herod Antipas. Simeon was called *Niger*, the Latin word for “black.” Lucius hailed from Cyrene in North Africa. This means that there were many kinds of people in the church. Some of the leaders were not Jews at all.

These leaders took their discipleship so seriously that the Spirit showed them God’s will for missions. Saul and Barnabas were chosen and ordained to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. In this way the prophecy of Acts 1:8 was fulfilled.

So these verses tell us that mission, teaching, holy living, and faithfulness, of both Jews and Gentiles, are the cornerstones of discipleship.

The needs of others give the church great opportunities (chances) for service and witness. No doubt there are a great many needs around you. How well have you made good use of these needs to serve others and to witness to them about Jesus?



Paul and Barnabas’s work in the Antioch church shows that mission, teaching, holy living, and faithfulness are important for discipleship.

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 626, 627, 1021–1025; Ellen G. White, “The Centurion,” pages 315–318; “Barriers Broken Down,” pages 399–403; “In the Outer Court,” pages 621–623, in *The Desire of Ages*; John 12:20–33; Acts 9:1–31; Acts 22:1–21; Acts 26:2–18.

“He [the centurion] had not seen Jesus the Savior. But the reports he heard had inspired him with faith. The centurion believed that the Jews’ religion was much better than his own. Already he had broken through the barriers of national prejudice and hatred that separated the Romans from the Jews. He had shown respect for the service of God. He had shown kindness to the Jews as His worshipers. He found that the teaching of Christ met the need of the soul. All that the centurion knew of spiritual things helped him to accept Jesus’ words.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 315.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Look more closely at the Antioch

model (example). What things could your local church learn from this model that could make it a better witness for Christ?

❷ As a church, the Adventists are very good at getting people to join. The growing rate of baptisms prove this. But we are struggling with the question of discipleship. What to do with these people after we baptize them? As we know, far too many who join soon leave. What are your own thoughts on this problem? What has been your experience in becoming a disciple after you were baptized and joined the church? What do you wish might have been done differently with you? What do you think your local church could do, and must do, to disciple new members better? Be prepared to talk about this issue in your Sabbath School class.

❸ The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53. Go over the chapter again about the death of Jesus for our sake. What do the verses here tell us that Jesus did for us? What hope does it offer? Why is it so important to focus on His death for us in all our witnessing? Why is it so important that we keep the Cross as the center of all work as disciples too?