

Preparing (Getting Ready) for Discipleship¹



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 5–7; Matthew 10:1; Matthew 10:5–11:1; Mark 3:1–19; Luke 6:12–16.

MEMORY VERSE: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill can’t [cannot] be hidden. Also, people do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand. Then it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine in front of others. Then they will see the good things you do. And they will praise your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16, NIV).

A DISCIPLE IS A LEARNER/FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST. He or she always tries to become like Jesus. Just as Jesus trained and sent out His disciples (followers), every local church must start a program for the training, encouraging, and developing of disciples. After all, what good does it do us if new baptized members soon leave the church? We must be faithful to Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19. Why? Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (NIV). The word translated “teach” comes from the Greek word that also means “to make a disciple.” (Many versions translate it in this way.)

This week we will look at how we can prepare (get ready) for discipleship.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT): How did Jesus prepare His disciples? What principles (rules) can we learn for ourselves about discipleship from Jesus before He sent them out? What can we learn from the Sermon on the Mount that is important for discipleship? What kind of opposition (attacks) should disciples of Christ expect?

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

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 10**THE APPOINTING (CHOOSING)
OF THE APOSTLES
(MARK 3:13–18)**

Mark 3 begins with Jesus entering a synagogue (Jewish church) and healing a man, with a withered hand, on the Sabbath. It was one of His famous Sabbath healings. A great puzzle is found in these verses (Mark 3:1–12). The rulers tried to figure out how they might kill Jesus. But great crowds of people flocked after Him. One group feared His power. Another desired to be blessed by it.

**What was happening here in
Mark 3:13–18 and Luke 6:12–16?**

From both stories, it seems that at some point Jesus got away from a great crowd that followed Him. He took with Him a few chosen disciples. From this group of disciples, He then picked out twelve to do the work of apostles.

For this work, Jesus chose the ones He wanted. This suggests that He Himself begins making the choices. He makes the call and we answer. This means that we must be ready to serve the Lord in any way we can.

How are disciples and apostles different? Disciples were learners. They followed a master to study with that master. The word *apostle* comes from two Greek words *apo* and *stello*, meaning “to send from.” An apostle was an ambassador sent to represent

a master or a kingdom. Both a disciple and an apostle are students. But an apostle received additional training to be sent forth as a representative of the master or organization.

Jesus appointed (chose) the Twelve so that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. Matthew says that He “gave them authority (power) to drive out evil spirits and to heal every illness and sickness” (Matthew 10:1, NIV). Jesus chose them to supervise trained workers to help with caring for the large crowds that followed wherever He went (adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, page 322).



Jesus spent a lot of time training the Twelve.

How satisfied are you with the work that you are doing for the Lord? Should you be doing more? Could you be doing more? What is holding you back? Is it your own pride and selfishness?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 11**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
(Matthew 5 and 6)**

Many see the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) as Jesus' great opening speech. In this speech, He listed the rules for His kingdom. It is also an announcement about discipleship. This is because it holds the keys to being a faithful disciple of Christ.

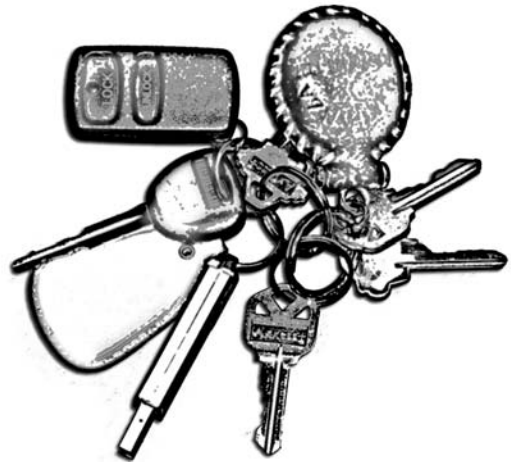
What was the background of the sermon in Matthew 5:1? Who did Jesus give it to?

No one knows how many books have been written about this sermon. For our purposes, we want to look at the things that explain what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

What is the message in Matthew 5:13–16 for us, as disciples of Christ? Why are these words very important to us as Adventists, with our understanding of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–12 in mind?

What important lesson is Jesus giving us here for discipleship in Matthew 6:5–13?

Why are these words in Matthew 6:19–21 the key to what true discipleship means? Ask yourself, "Where is my treasure [my heart], in heaven or on earth?" If you do not like the answer, what can you do to change?



The Sermon on the Mount holds the keys.

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 12**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT,
CONTINUED (Matthew 7)**

In an earlier lesson, we discussed that one of the greatest struggles we face as a church is keeping new members. How can we keep the new members in the church after we baptize them? All this is connected with the theme of discipleship. This is the theme of teaching people what it means to be a follower of Christ and a citizen in His new kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with examples and teachings that all disciples of Christ must learn to follow. As we continue to study the sermon, ask yourself, "How can I use these teachings in my own life? Also, how can our church better teach these things to new members, to make them better disciples of Christ?"

What lesson or warning is given in Matthew 7:1–5 that is important for all disciples of Christ to learn?

What does it mean not to judge?

What message is Jesus giving here in Matthew 7:15–20 to His disciples? As you read these verses, ask yourself, “What kind of fruit am I bearing?”

To claim to be a follower, a student, or a disciple of Christ is one thing. But to really do it is another. As we seek to make disciples, or to be good disciples ourselves, we must not forget the clear words of Jesus in the following verses.

Why is it important to understand what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:24–27? What issues are important? How do we understand these words with the other Bible promises of salvation (God’s plan for saving sinners) by faith and not by works?

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 13

**INSTRUCTIONS (TEACHINGS)
FOR A MISSIONARY TOUR
(Matthew 10:5–11)**

Jesus made a promise that His disciples would be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). But it was not quickly fulfilled. At first, the disciples watched Him work with people. Jesus was ministering (working) in Galilee. “He preached the good news of the kingdom. And healed every illness and sickness.” He saw the crowds and had mercy on them, because “they

were beaten down and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:35, 36, NIV). Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is huge. But there are only a few workers.” Jesus then invited them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers (verses 37, 38, NIV).



Jesus’ disciples watched Him heal the man with the withered hand.

Read Jesus’ words to the Twelve in Matthew 10:1 and Matthew 10:5–23. What principles (rules) are found in these words that we could use today in our work of trying to make disciples?

There is a lot that Christ’s modern-day disciples could learn from these verses. One thing that should be very clear is that witnessing for Christ is not going to be easy. There will be people who will oppose, fight, and attack you. So, we should not be surprised when these things come. If

they do not happen, we should be worried.

Read again the verses for today. What kind of attacks, hardships, and suffering should we expect? In what ways have you experienced some of what Jesus said here almost two thousand years ago?

Jesus did not promise His disciples an easy time of it. The history of the church proves just how true His words were. But, at the same time, the Lord gives these men wonderful words of encouragement and hope. Read those promises and claim them for yourself. What can you take from them that you need for yourself right now?

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 14

MISSION OF THE SEVENTY (Luke 10:1–23)

Luke alone explains that Jesus appointed (chose) seventy disciples. He then sent them on a missionary tour (Luke 10:1–23; read also Exodus 24:1, 9). In many ways, Jesus' instructions (teaching) were almost the same as what He gave to the Twelve. After teaching them, Jesus sent them two by two to the towns and places He was planning to visit later. The purpose of the disciples' mission was to prepare people for Jesus' own missionary tour. In a way, the disciples were to prepare the way for the people to accept Jesus when He came.

How does that fit in with what we are to do today in helping prepare people to meet Jesus?



Just as Jesus sent the Seventy out to prepare towns for his visit, He sends us to prepare the way for His soon coming.

What was the reason for sending disciples two by two? What can we learn from that for ourselves today?

Luke 10:17 (NIRV) says the Seventy returned from their mission with joy because “the demons obey us when we speak in your name.” No doubt, they must have been thrilled at the power given them through Jesus. And they admit that it is His power. But Jesus tells them to be joyful about the thing that is really important.

Why did Jesus say what He says in Luke 10:20? What is the message for us in these words too?

Doing great work in Jesus' name does not guarantee us salvation (Matthew 7:22, 23). Some will find that

out one day. Church position and authority (power), even great success at winning souls, are not the things that are really important. The really important thing is having our names written in heaven. Names that are not blotted out (removed) (Revelation 3:5). This is because a name written in heaven means eternal life through Jesus.

We can be so busy working for others that we neglect our own spiritual life and health. How can you avoid falling into that trap? At the same time, how does working for the salvation of others make your own walk with Jesus stronger for you?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 15

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 322–326, 746–750; Ellen G. White, “The Sermon on the Mount,” pages 312–314; “The First Evangelists,” pages 349–358, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Teacher Sent From God,” pages 79, 80, in *Education*; Mark 6:6–13.

“In that brief verse [Matthew 5:1] there are three important clues about the Sermon on the Mount. (1) Jesus began to teach when he had sat down. When a Jewish Rabbi was teaching officially he sat to teach. . . . So, when Jesus sat down to teach his disciples, this shows that this teaching is important and official. (2) Matthew goes on to say that *when Jesus had opened*

His mouth, he taught them. . . . In Greek the phrase is important in two ways. (a) It means a serious and honorable speech. . . . (b) It also means that the person is really opening his heart and fully pouring out his mind. It shows close, heart-to-heart teaching. . . . (3) Now the Greek of this sentence shows that the verb *taught* is not an *aorist* [tense], but an *imperfect*. This means that Jesus has spoken about this subject again and again. So, the translation should be: ‘This is what Jesus used to teach them.’ Matthew has said as clearly as possible as the Greek language shows that the Sermon on the Mount is not one sermon given at only one time. Instead, it shows that Jesus taught his disciples very often.”—Adapted from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), volume 1, pages 86, 87.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What kind of discipleship program does your own local church have? What are its strong points? Its weak points? What useful steps can your church make to be stronger in the area of discipleship?
- ❷ When a person joins your local church, what can you do to help disciple that person along? What special gifts might you have that can be of help? Also, what about your Sabbath School class itself? What part can and should the class have in developing disciples?

③ Making disciples takes disciples. These disciples are people who know what it means to follow Jesus, to learn from Jesus, and to copy His

methods. What did you learn this week from the verses that would help make you better prepared to disciple new members?