

More Lessons in Discipleship¹



SABBATH—MARCH 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 4:36–41; Mark 6:51, 52; Luke 8:25; Luke 24:37; John 6:19.

MEMORY VERSE: “Right away Jesus called out to them, ‘Be brave! It is I. Don’t [do not] be afraid’ ” (Matthew 14:27, NlrV).

JESUS CHOSE HIS DISCIPLES (FOLLOWERS) so that they could be with Him and could learn from Him. But, clearly, they were not as discerning (smart) as one would expect. How much different are we? Some of us have been walking with God for several years, and we still do not understand fully what discipleship requires of us. As in the natural world, so it is in the spiritual. Growth is important for life. Every day should bring some growth in our Christian experience. What “preparation of soil” is necessary to make discipleship grow and succeed?

This week’s lesson will look at more examples from the Word of God that can help us understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

THIS WEEK’S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT): Why were the disciples of Christ often full of fear? What can we learn from Jesus’ warnings about the leaven² of the Pharisees? How do we answer to those who stubbornly close their hearts to our witness?

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

2. leaven—yeast or something added to dough to make it rise; negative influences of the Pharisees.

SUNDAY—MARCH 9**LESSONS AT SEA (Mark 4:36–41)**

When the events of Mark 4 happened, the disciples had already been with Jesus for a while. How much they must have learned from Jesus!

What do the disciples' words to Jesus in verse 38 show about themselves? How often do we find ourselves making almost the same answer in scary times?

It is so easy for us to do the same thing. When bad times and problems happen, we often wonder if God cares at all. It is a bit strange that the disciples were scared because Jesus was right there the whole time. Jesus was the one who first told them to take the boat across to begin with. This storm did not take Jesus by surprise. In the same way, our problems should not take us by surprise.



Jesus was with the disciples in the boat the whole time the storm raged around them.

What meaning (if any) can be found in the fact that the disciples, not the storm, woke Jesus?

Notice how afraid the disciples were all through the storm. They feared the storm. And then, after the storm was calmed, they seemed to fear Jesus. The example of such power was very impressive. But after their time with Christ, the disciples should have known that they had nothing to fear from Him. This power should have brought great hope and comfort to the disciples. This is because by now they should have known the character of the One (Jesus) who had all that power. So, this story shows that these men still had a lot to learn about what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

When was the last time you wondered if the Lord cared about you and your situation? What lessons did you learn from that problem that you could use next time you have a problem?

MONDAY—MARCH 10**LESSONS AT SEA (CONTINUED)
(Matthew 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52)**

The sea is a good place to learn lessons about discipleship. After all, as humans we are totally dependent upon God for everything (read Job 12:10; Daniel 5:23; Acts 17:28). It is easy to remember this when you are out on the water. For example, what is under your

feet will not hold you up but will swallow you instead. Perhaps that is why the Lord chose to use the sea to teach His disciples a few more lessons about faith. This is very important for any successful discipleship.

The disciples had finished a successful missionary tour (Mark 6: 6–13). They witnessed the feeding of the five thousand. And then they went through their first experience with the storm on the lake. By then the disciples finally should have become wiser. But, the evening after the feeding of the five thousand, another storm caught them on the lake. This time the storm came when Jesus was not in the boat with them.

What are the many mistakes the disciples made in these two stories found in Matthew 14:22–33 and Mark 6:45–52?

One story does not have the event of Peter walking on the water. But both show that those who witnessed what happened were very impressed. Some openly called Jesus the Son of God. In Mark's story, the disciples were very much surprised about what they had experienced. It was surprising to witness Jesus' ability to make the weather obey Him. But it was more surprising to see that Jesus had the power to walk on water, especially during a storm! Truly the disciples witnessed the power of God in ways that few people ever do.



Peter's failure serves as a powerful lesson to all disciples of Jesus: We cannot work for the Lord in our own power.

What point do you think Mark was making about faith and belief in Mark 6:51, 52? What lessons might there be for us in that point?

TUESDAY—MARCH 11

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES (Matthew 16:1–12)

Answer the following questions after reading Matthew 16:1–12:

1. What proof do we have that the leaders who came to Jesus were not sincere in their question? After all, what is wrong with having a sign from heaven? Is the Bible not full of signs from heaven? What point should we as disciples learn from what is happening here? Read earlier chapters in Matthew; read also Luke 16:29–31.

2. Look carefully at Jesus' words

to the Sadducees³ and the Pharisees. What is the principle behind Jesus' warning to them (Matthew 23:23)?

3. Read Jesus' words to the disciples in Matthew 16:8–11. What point is Jesus making to them? Why do we find it so easy to do the same thing? For example, we as humans (people) forget the great things God has done for us.

What a big difference between the bread of life and the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees! But note how easy it is to get them confused. All disciples of Christ need to know that belief, or following traditions,⁴ or defending the faith are not always the same as being a disciple of Christ. How easy it is for us to get settled in what we believe, or in how we worship, or in how we practice our faith. Then we let these things slide into our daily life and customs, instead of using them only as tools to reach our goal. Our most important goal is to be a faithful disciple of Christ, doing His will and showing His love and His character to the world.

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 12

LESSONS FROM FEAR (1 John 4:18)

Perhaps you have noticed something through these lessons. That is, you may

3. Sadducees—one of the two religious groups of Israel. The other is the Pharisees.

4. traditions—customs or rules made by people.

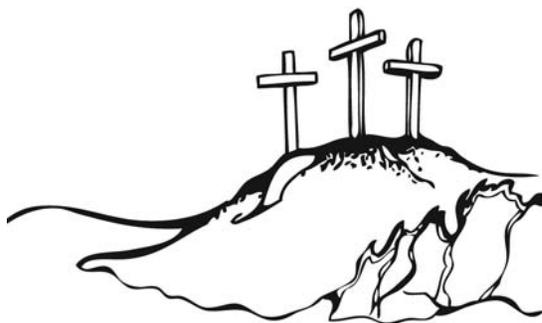
5. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.

have noticed how often the disciples were afraid. All through the Gospels, we often find the disciples were afraid in many situations in the Bible.

What was it in these different situations that caused them to be afraid? Matthew 14:27; Matthew 17:6, 7; Mark 10:32; Luke 8:25; Luke 24:37; John 6:19. What can we learn from their experiences?

What made the disciples afraid in Mark 9:30–32? What important point can we learn from this example?

What is so sad is that the disciples were afraid of the one thing that offered them the greatest hope. This hope was salvation⁵ through the death of Jesus that forgave their sins. They feared what they did not understand. They feared what they did not want to know. If they had understood what the Cross was all about, they would not have been afraid. So, it was their lack of knowledge that made them afraid.



The cross teaches us that we have nothing to fear in this life.

As disciples, as followers of Christ, we should not be afraid at all. The wonderful things Jesus did while on this earth should fill us with hope and trust in His power to save us today. Jesus walked on water during a storm. He healed a paralytic.⁶ He fed five thousand with just a few loaves of bread. He showed His love to us by dying on the cross as our Substitute (in our place). Sure, sin is real. The devil is real. Hell will be real. And we need to know of the dangers to our souls (Matthew 10:28). But in the end, as disciples, we should continue to hold dear God's love as shown in Christ. And we should learn to live within the hope and comfort of God's wonderful love and amazing grace⁷ for, and toward, us.

THURSDAY—MARCH 13

DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS

“I want atheism⁸ to be true. I feel uneasy when some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't [is not] just that I don't [do not] believe in God. And I hope that I'm [I am] right in my belief. It's [It is] that I hope there is no God! I don't [do not] want there to be a God; I don't [do not] want the universe to be like that.”—Adapted from Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), page 130.

6. paralytic—a person who has paralysis, a disease that makes him or her unable to move his or her body or limbs (arms and/or legs).

7. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

8. atheism—the belief and practice that there is no God in control of the universe.

9. Gospels—the four books in the Bible that tell the story of Jesus' life and teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

Reread the quote from today's study. As disciples, what is to be our attitude (feeling) toward someone like that? Which Bible verses come to mind as you think about this person? Write out the verses.

Now that you have written down the verses, take the time to go over them. Does any special theme come through? Are your verses those of mercy, judgment, sorrow, or punishment? Or something else? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

A very important part of being a disciple is witnessing. All through the Gospels,⁹ we see Jesus preparing His disciples to witness and lead others to salvation. Some folks believed quite quickly. But others seemed set on refusing to accept Jesus, no matter what.

As disciples of Christ, as we witness, we will come across all kinds of people. Some of them may not be as honest as Thomas Nagel. But they will show the same kind of attitude.

How do we act toward these people? Anger? Love? A feeling of personal failure? All or none of the above?

What can we learn from the life and teachings of Jesus that will help us as disciples of Jesus? How can they teach us to work with those who have

closed hearts and minds? When do we stop being responsible for them?

FRIDAY—MARCH 14

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 415–417, 426–441, 746–750; Ellen G. White, “Peace be Still,” pages 333–341; “A Night on the Lake,” pages 377–382; “The Foreshadowing of the Cross,” pages 410–418; “He Was Transfigured,” pages 419–425; “The Walk to Emmaus,” pages 795–801, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Sower Went Forth to Sow,” page 40, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*; “Light Through Darkness,” pages 349, 350, in *The Great Controversy*.

“Peter had been long with Jesus. But he still had a wrong idea of the plan of salvation. He did not want to see the cross in the work of Christ. But it was through the cross that life and hope were to come to dying men.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 7, 1891.

“God’s children are not to depend on feelings and emotions. When they continually change between hope and fear, the heart of Christ is hurt. This is because He has given them strong proof of His love. He wants them to be very strong in the most holy faith. He wants them to do the work He has given them. Then their hearts will become in His hands as holy harps. All the music from these harps will send forth praise and thanksgiving to Jesus, who was sent by God to take

away the sins of the world.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*¹⁰ to *Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pages 518, 519.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What are some of the things that you fear? How can you learn to overcome those fears? But are there things that we should rightly fear? Be prepared to discuss your answers in class on Sabbath.
- ❷ What are ways we can become modern-day Sadducees and Pharisees? Why is that easier than we think? How are these attitudes (feelings) shown in the church today? Also, what are the steps that a person takes in going from being a disciple to being a Pharisee? Are they easier than going from being a Pharisee to a disciple? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class.
- ❸ What would you consider to be the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees in the church today?
- ❹ As a class, talk about the attitude of Thomas Nagel in Thursday’s lesson. In what ways do we, even as Christians, show an attitude like this toward God? Are there things about our faith or doctrines that we shut our minds to because we just do not want to believe them? Could it be that we have a hard time learning the lessons the Lord wants to teach us because we do not want to learn them?

10. Testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.