

Examples of Discipleship¹



SABBATH—MARCH 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 14:14; Matthew 15:32; Matthew 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 6:12, 13; Luke 16:19–31; Luke 17:4, 5; Luke 18:9–14; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 5:16.

MEMORY VERSE: “Heal those who are sick. Bring those who are dead back to life. Make those who have skin diseases ‘clean’ again. Drive out demons. You have received freely, so give freely” (Matthew 10:8, NIV).

DURING THIS QUARTER, WE HAVE LOOKED AT JESUS, the disciple (follower)-gathering teacher. We have looked at those He chose to follow Him. He gave the necessary training. He showed His actions as examples. He taught us to be disciples. From Him, we have been given all that we need to be disciples.

This week is a summary of several important points of this quarter's study. It tries to review some of the actions, themes, and practices of Jesus that may have a positive influence (effect) on disciples. These are the things that must lay the foundation (basis) of our work as disciples. The goal is to understand how patterns for discipleship can be used in the twenty-first century.

THIS WEEK'S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT): What part should compassion (mercy) and forgiveness have in the life and ministry (work) of disciples? What example did Jesus give to us about how we should treat people who are different from us or have different backgrounds? How important is the church itself in the work of discipleship? What can we learn from Jesus about the importance of prayer?

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

SUNDAY—MARCH 23**COMPASSION (MERCY) AND FORGIVENESS (Luke 17:3–5)**

When Jesus was on earth, He showed compassion (mercy), sometimes translated pity (read Matthew 14:14; Matthew 15:32; Matthew 20:34; Mark 1:41; Mark 6:34; Luke 7:13). In Greek, the word most commonly translated “compassion” or “pity” suggests the idea that someone’s heart is touched to give help. If with our hard, selfish hearts we can be touched with pity and compassion for others, how much more so would the sinless Son of God feel for suffering humans?

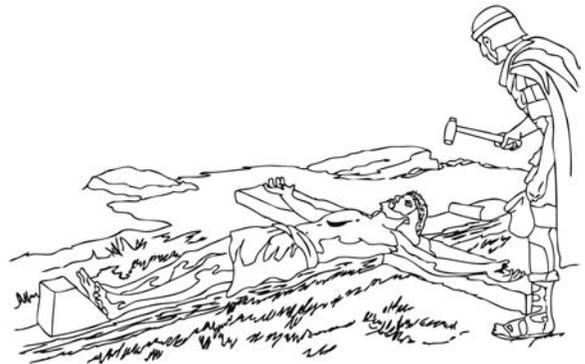


Jesus showed compassion (mercy) to others. As His disciples, we serve Him by showing His compassion to others too.

Read those Bible verses listed above. What were the things that Jesus showed compassion over? Why is such compassion so important for us as disciples?

Besides compassion, Jesus showed forgiveness. Over and over again the

disciples were with Jesus as He forgave the sins of so many people. They witnessed (saw) how He treated Simon, the former leper. Simon was the one who thought unkindly of Mary (Luke 7:36–50). The disciples witnessed Jesus’ greatest act of forgiveness in His prayer for His enemies while they hung Him on the cross (Luke 23:34). Peter, too, experienced Jesus’ forgiveness in a special way. When Jesus was arrested, Peter left him and ran away. Later at Jesus’ trial, three times Peter denied knowing Jesus. But Jesus forgave him and restored him to fellowship in the presence of his fellow disciples (John 21:9–17).



The disciples heard Jesus pray for His enemies as they hung Him on the cross. As His disciples, we must forgive those who hurt us.

What part should forgiveness play in our experience as disciples and in our work of making disciples? Read Luke 17:3–5; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 1:14.

Our God is a merciful God. Because of His compassion (mercy), He chose to forgive and save us from

our sins. If not, our sins would have led to our future loss of heaven. How important that, as disciples, we always keep in mind this compassion and forgiveness! What better reason could we have for leading others to Christ, who means so much to us?

MONDAY—MARCH 24

THE REJECTED AND THE UNPOPULAR (Luke 16:19–31)

Jesus' ministry and the training of His disciples happened in a highly organized society with separate classes (groups). The lines were very clear between men and women, religious groups and the common people, rich and poor, and Pharisees and publicans (tax collectors). For example, the woman's place was in the home and then only in certain parts of it.

What message about class separations is pictured here in Luke 16:19–31? What was the Lord's attitude (feeling) toward the wealthy (rich) class of people? Answer the same questions about how Jesus felt about the actions and attitudes (feelings) of the religious leaders and groups in Luke 18: 9–14.

Jesus clearly realized many of the problems that come from wealth and from being wealthy. He openly mixed with, taught, and supported the poor and unaccepted people in His society.

In the Gospels² we can study about the kind of people that Jesus worked with and for. Sure, He tried to reach the upper classes too. But at the same time Jesus ministered (helped) to Gentiles (non-Jews), prostitutes (people who sell their bodies for money), lepers, publicans, demon possessed, Romans, those with disabilities, the blind, the poor, a whole group of people who were unaccepted and rejected by society.

Again, think about what Jesus came to the world to do. He came to die for the sins of every human. So, it makes perfect sense that while Jesus was here He would minister to everyone who would need His help.

What is your attitude (feeling) toward the unaccepted and rejected people in your society? What is your church's attitude toward them? How can you tell if you really care?



Jesus helped all those who were unaccepted and unwanted by society.

2. 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.

TUESDAY—MARCH 25**DEALING WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE (Matthew 23:15)**

Yesterday we learned how Jesus helped unaccepted and rejected people in His time. Today we want to focus on that a little more. But we will talk about people who come from different geographical areas.

Prejudice³ was very common in Jesus' world. Different groups saw themselves as better than those around them. For example, Greeks believed non-Greeks were barbarians.⁴ All through the literature (the writings) of Jesus' day we find this kind of prejudice. Sadly, people living in Jesus' time fell into that same kind of thinking. It did not matter how religious they claimed to be.

What do the verses in Exodus 12:38; Exodus 18:1; Numbers 12:1; Ruth 1:16, 17; and Matthew 23:15 tell us about the geographical differences that made up the nation of Israel?

From its beginning as a nation, Israel was never a pure people. The idea of a pure lineage is a more modern idea. This idea is a by-product of the theory of evolution.⁵ God has made all people "one blood" (Acts 17:26, NKJV). We are all children of

3. prejudice—dislike.

4. barbarians—uncivilized people living in neighboring countries.

5. theory of evolution—the belief that we become humans by slowly changing from a lower form of life to a higher form of life.

6. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

Adam and Eve, our first parents. And through faith in Jesus, we all become the "children of God" (John 1:12).

It does not matter what color, nation, race, or religion we are.

Christ's death on the cross, for every human, should make all disciples equal to one another. More so, it should remove all sense of prejudice against any group of people. In front of Jesus on the cross, we all stand equal. More than anyone else in the world, Christ's disciples should cleanse themselves of all kinds of social and geographical prejudices they have toward others. In the end, there are only two classes (groups) of people: the saved and the lost. And we who are saved should be busy as Jesus was. We should try to find the lost and teach them about the promise of salvation that we have claimed for ourselves.

How much have you been influenced by⁶ the prejudices in your own society?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 26**THE CHURCH (Acts 20:28)**

As we have seen all through this quarter, God calls us as disciples to do many things. We are to spread the gospel. We are to minister to the unaccepted and the needy. We are to

make disciples, and on and on. And this should be happening in every nation around the world. The question is: How are we supposed to do this?

How do we make disciples according to Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:14–22; Ephesians 4:11–13; Colossians 1:17, 18?

Jesus was really a disciple-gathering teacher. He used every chance to call, train, educate, and support disciples. He was never too busy to help a needy soul. Disciple-training was the most important part of Jesus' ministry (work). We believe and suggest strongly that disciple-making, teaching, training, and giving support were an important part of Jesus' ministry. In the same way, they must be an important part of the mission of every church in the twenty-first century.

But no one can do it alone. That is why there is the church. This responsibility is not limited to pastors, Bible workers, elders, deacons, and other church officers. It is the responsibility of every member. Jesus' command excused no disciple from this responsibility. Christ's words, "Go ye" (Matthew 28:19, KJV), means you.

Some members may feel uncomfortable with this idea because they do not have training. But when Jesus called fishermen for discipleship, they were not trained. Jesus had to train them. In the same way, every church must provide training for every member. Each new member should be placed in a discipleship class for

training, growth, and support. Advanced classes for experienced disciples must be established, and every trained disciple should be put to work for Jesus.

Before leaving this world, Jesus gave His disciples the mission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19, NIV). This command has not changed. This gospel of the kingdom still must be preached in all the world before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). If Jesus would not make the stones cry out to finish the work, then He has no one else except His church to finish the job.

How involved are you in the work that Jesus has called us all to do? Or are you too busy doing your own thing? When are you going to make the changes you know in your heart should have been made long ago?

THURSDAY—MARCH 27

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER (Luke 5:15, 16)

Read the following quote from Ellen G. White. What principles can we learn from this for ourselves?

"The Majesty [King Jesus] of heaven, while on earth, prayed much to His Father. He was often bowed all night in prayer. . . . The Mount of Olives was the favorite place of the Son of God for His prayers. Often after the

crowds had left Him for the night, He did not rest, even though He was tired from the labors [work] of the day. . . . The city was sleeping in silence. The disciples had returned to their homes to rest. But Jesus did not sleep. His prayers went up to His Father from the Mount of Olives. He prayed that His disciples might be kept from the evil influences [powers] of the world. He also prayed that His own soul might be made stronger for the duties and problems of the coming day. All night, while His followers were sleeping, their Teacher was praying. The dew and the frost of night fell upon His head bowed in prayer. Jesus' example is left for His followers." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, page 167.

What were the events that encouraged the prayers in Luke 5:15, 16; Luke 6:12, 13; and Luke 9:28–31? What can they teach us, as disciples of Christ, about prayer and how important prayer is to our mission?

Jesus, the God-man, depended so much on prayer for success while on earth. Then how much more do we, as sinful humans, need it for successful discipleship? How satisfied are you with your prayer life? What do you pray about? How much time do you spend praying? What changes might you need to make in your own prayer life?

FRIDAY—MARCH 28

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 345–348, 553–560, 658–660, 881–887, 1110; Ellen G. White, “Come Rest Awhile,” pages 359–363; “A Night on the Lake,” pages 377–379; “The Foreshadowing of the Cross,” page 411; “He Was Transformed,” pages 419–421; “Gethsemane,” pages 687–693, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Teacher Sent From God,” page 80; “Faith and Prayer,” page 259, in *Education*.

Here are some of the useful things that our church can do in the area of discipleship:

1. **Make disciple-making an important goal.**
2. **Make plans and methods to finish the work.**
3. **Train individuals for leadership for each program.**
4. **Organize all members for work as disciples.**
5. **Establish a program of discipleship training.**
6. **Study the people living in the community around the church and their needs.**
7. **Develop a bridge-building program that will break down prejudices, then meet the people's needs, and establish relationships with the community around each church.**

8. **Introduce programs to use the skills of new converts (believers) in the local church. Help them develop a deeper connection to Christ.**
9. **Develop programs that will help members, and new converts (believers), in discovering, developing, and making use of their spiritual gifts.**
10. **Make sure that there are good programs for making and supporting disciples.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Take a prayerful look at those steps listed above. What might you add that would help a church to be successful at making disciples? What can you do to help your church establish these steps?

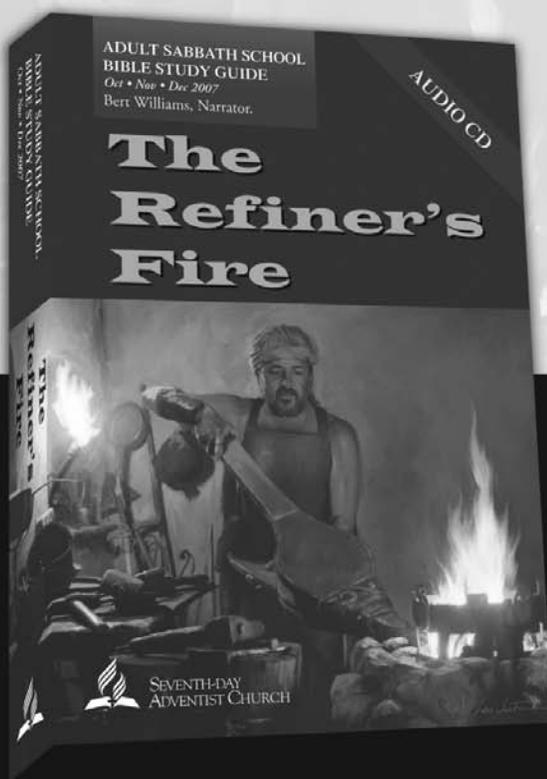
❷ How much time do you spend in prayer for the work of the church as a whole? Why not spend a certain amount of time each day praying for our worldwide mission? Why not have your Sabbath School class set aside a certain time during each class to pray for the work of the worldwide church?

❸ How can we help both pastors and church members better understand that the work of discipleship is the work of every member of the church? How can you help the local church better use the gifts and talents of members? What are the kinds of things that prevent church members from becoming involved in the work of discipleship and witness?

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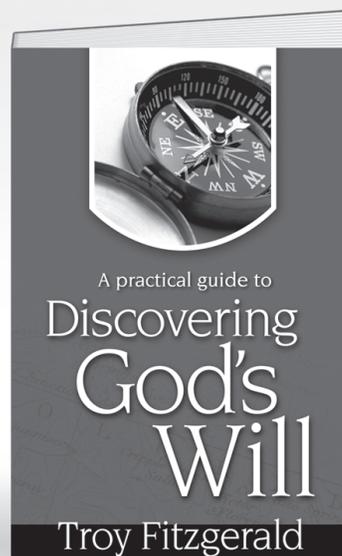
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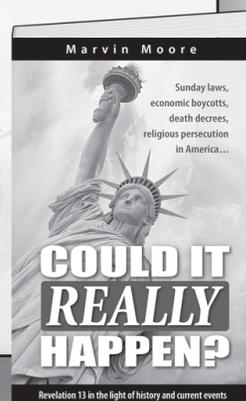
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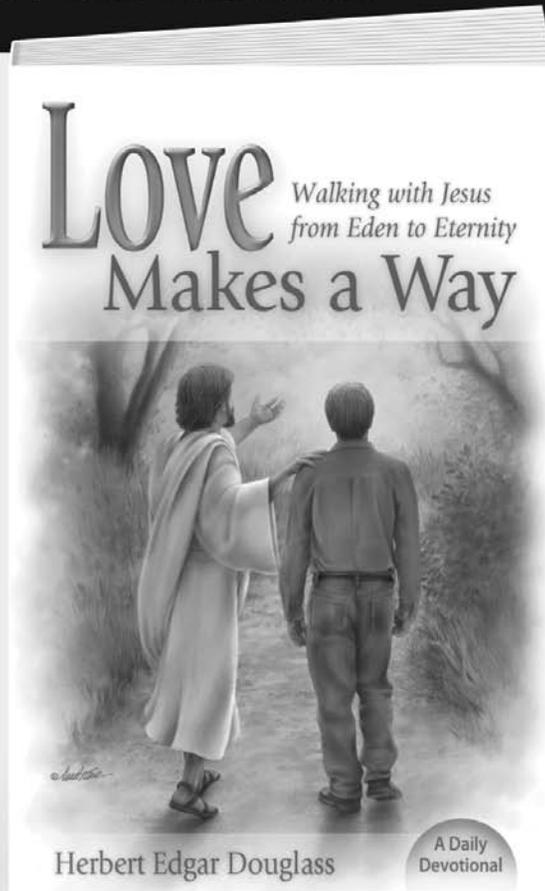
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Recently the pope ratified statements that Protestant "ecclesial communities" are "defective." He has stated that "we intensify our endeavors towards 'the holy objective' of reconciling all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ."

Surely it's time to read again the messages for these last days that have been given to us from God through Ellen White.