

# Preparation for Discipleship



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Matthew 5–7, 10:1, 10:5–11:1, Mark 3:1–19, Luke 6:12–16.*

**Memory Text:** “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (*Matthew 5:14–16, NRSV*).

A disciple is a learner/follower of Jesus Christ who constantly seeks to become like the Master. Just as Jesus trained and sent out His disciples, every local church must inaugurate an effective program for the facilitating, encouraging, and developing of disciples. After all, what good does it do us if the folk we baptize soon leave? We are not being faithful to our Divine commission, because Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (*Matt. 28:19*); yet, the word translated “teach” comes from the Greek word that also means “to make a disciple.” (Indeed, numerous versions translate it in that manner.)

This week we will look at preparation for discipleship.

**The Week at a Glance:** How did Jesus prepare His disciples? What principles can we learn for ourselves regarding discipleship from what He said to them before sending them out? What can we learn from the Sermon on the Mount that is crucial for discipleship? What kind of opposition should disciples of Christ expect?

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 16.*

## The Appointing of the Apostles

Mark 3 begins with Jesus entering a synagogue and healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, one of His famous Sabbath healings. A great irony is found in these texts (*Mark 3:1–12*): The rulers sought how they might kill Him, while great multitudes of people flocked after Him. One group feared His power; another coveted to be blessed and benefited by it.

**Read** Mark 3:13–18. What was happening here? See also Luke 6:12–16.

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From both accounts, it seems that at some point Jesus got away from the great multitude that followed Him, taking with Him a select group of disciples. From among this group of disciples, He then picked out twelve to do the work of apostles.

For this task, Jesus chose the ones He wanted. This implies, as we have seen, that the initiative resides with Him. He extends the call; we respond. This means that we must be available for service, in whatever capacity we are called to serve in.

How do disciples and apostles differ? Disciples were learners. They followed a master to study with that master. The term *apostle* comes from two Greek words, *apo* and *stello*, implying “to send from.” An apostle was an ambassador or emissary sent to represent a master or a kingdom. While both a disciple and an apostle are students, an apostle received additional training to be sent forth as a representative of the master or organization.

Jesus appointed 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 to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (*Matt. 10:1, NIV*). It appears He chose them to provide trained workers to assist in caring for the large throngs that flocked wherever He went (adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 322).

**How content 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? In most cases, is it not your own pride and selfishness?**

## The Sermon on the Mount

Many see the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) as Jesus’ inaugural address, in which He outlined the ethics of His kingdom. It is also, in many ways, a manifesto of discipleship, for it holds the keys to being a faithful disciple of Christ.

**Read** Matthew 5:1. What was the background of the sermon? To whom did He immediately give it?

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Who knows how many books have been written expounding upon this sermon? For our purposes, we want to look at what things in it are especially pertinent to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

**Read** Matthew 5:13–16. What is the message there for us, as disciples of Christ? Why are these words particularly important to us as Adventists, given our understanding of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–12?

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

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**Read** Matthew 6:19–21. Why are these words, in many ways, the essence of what true discipleship is about? Ask yourself, “Where is my treasure [That is, where is my heart?], in heaven or on earth?” If you do not like the answer, what can you do to change?

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## The Sermon on the Mount, Continued

As said in a previous lesson, one of the greatest struggles we face as a church is retaining new members, keeping them in the flock after we baptize them. All this is linked with the theme of discipleship, the theme of teaching people what it means to be a follower of Christ, a citizen in His new kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with illustrations and teachings that all disciples of Christ must learn to follow. As we continue studying the sermon, ask yourself, “How can I apply 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?”

**Read** Matthew 7:1–5. What important lesson, and warning, is given there that is crucial for all disciples of Christ to learn? What does it mean not to judge?

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

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It is one thing to profess being a follower, a student, or a disciple of Christ; it is another to be one. As we seek to make disciples, or to be good disciples ourselves, we must not forget the clear words of Jesus in the following texts.

**Read** Matthew 7:24–27. Why is it important to understand what Jesus is saying here? What issues are, literally, at stake here? How do we understand these words with the other Bible promises of salvation being by faith and not by works?

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## Instructions for a Missionary Tour

Jesus' promise that His disciples would be fishers of men (*Matt. 4:19*) was not immediately fulfilled. At first they observed His activities. While ministering in Galilee "preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness," He saw the crowds and had compassion on them, "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (*Matt. 9:35, 36, NIV*). He commented to His disciples, " 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few' " and invited them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers (*vs. 37, NIV*).

**Read** Jesus' words to the Twelve (*Matt. 10:1, Matt 10:5–11:1*). What principles are found in these words that would apply to us today in our work of seeking to make disciples?

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There is a lot that Christ's modern-day disciples could learn from these texts. One thing, however, that should come through clearly is that witnessing for Christ is not going to be easy. There is going to be opposition, turmoil, and even, in some cases, persecution. Thus, we should not be surprised when these things come. What should concern us is when they do not.

**Read** again the texts for today. What kind of opposition, turmoil, and suffering should we expect? In what ways have you experienced in your own life some of what Jesus said here almost two thousand years ago?

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

## Mission of the Seventy

Luke alone mentions that Jesus appointed seventy disciples, whom He sent on a missionary tour (*Luke 10:1–23*; see also *Exod. 24:1, 9*). In many ways, His instructions were similar to what He gave to the Twelve. After instructing them, Jesus sent them two by two to the towns and places He was about to go. It appears that their mission was preparatory to Jesus' own. In a sense, they were to prepare the way for 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?

**What** was the advantage of sending them two by two? What can we take from that for ourselves today?

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Luke 10:17 says the Seventy returned from their mission with joy because “the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” No doubt, they must have been thrilled at the power given them through Jesus, and they acknowledge that it is His power. Jesus, though, while acknowledging the power given them, tells them to rejoice about the thing that really matters.

**Read** Luke 10:20. Why did Jesus say this? What message is there for us in these words, as well?

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Doing great deeds in the name of Jesus is no guarantee of salvation (*Matt. 7:22, 23*), as some will one day find out. Spiritual position, church authority, and even great success at winning souls are not the things that really matter. What really matters is having our names written in heaven, names that are not blotted out (*Rev. 3:5*), 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 subtle trap? At the same time, how does working for the salvation of others strengthen your own walk with Jesus?**

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

“In that brief verse [Matthew 5:1] there are three clues to the real significance of the Sermon on the Mount. (i) Jesus began to teach *when he had sat down*. When a Jewish Rabbi was teaching officially he sat to teach. . . . So, then, the very intimation that Jesus sat down to teach his disciples is the indication that this teaching is central and official. (ii) Matthew goes on to say that *when he had opened His mouth*, he taught them. . . . In Greek the phrase has a double significance. (a) In Greek it is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. . . . (b) It is used of a person’s utterance when he is really opening his heart and fully pouring out his mind. It is used of intimate teaching with no barriers between. . . . (iii) . . . Now the point is that in the Greek of this sentence, which we are studying, the verb *taught* is not an *aorist* [tense], but an *imperfect* and therefore it describes repeated and habitual action, and the translation should be: ‘This is what he used to teach them.’ Matthew has said as plainly as Greek will say it that the Sermon on the Mount is not one sermon of Jesus, given at one particular time and on one particular occasion; it is the essence of all that Jesus continuously and habitually taught his disciples.”  
—William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 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 practical 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, personally, to help disciple that person along? What specific gifts might you have that can be of help? Also, what about your Sabbath School class itself? What role can and should it have in the discipling process?
- ❸ Discipling takes disciples, those who know what it means to follow Jesus, to learn from Jesus, to be an imitator of Jesus. What did you learn this week from the texts we looked at that, if applied in your life, could make you better prepared to disciple new members?

# Hope Meets Hopelessness: Part 1

by CHARLOTTE ISHKANIAN

S. S. and Geetha Karikalan lived a comfortable life. They bought rice from farmers and sold it to retailers. Then the government cut out the middlemen in order to regulate the rice industry, and suddenly the Karikalans were out of work.

The family was desperate and talked about committing suicide. One day two Adventist women noticed the sad-looking couple getting off the city bus and asked if something was wrong. One of the women, Sahira, offered to pray for the couple there beside the road. Although S. S. and Geetha were of another religion, they accepted the prayers of these devout women. Sahira prayed that God would help them find work and that they would also find peace and hope in their lives.

After Sahira prayed, the couple admitted that they had thought about suicide, but because of her prayer, they felt peace. Sahira had to hurry to an appointment, but she asked permission to visit S. S. and Geetha. The couple gave her the address of Geetha's parents, where they were staying. Sahira invited the couple to visit their church that Sabbath and promised that they would find that Jesus could meet their needs. She gave them the address.

The couple attended the church that week. Sahira welcomed them warmly and gave them a Bible. The next day she visited them. The couple agreed to Bible studies, and Sahira and the pastor studied with them for several weeks. The couple's 13-year-old son, Santosh, joined them for the studies.

One day the pastor needed medicine for his asthma from Santosh's grandfather. Santosh and his grandfather walked to the pastor's apartment to deliver the medicine. While Grandfather talked with the pastor, Santosh went to the roof on the third floor of the apartment building to play cricket

with the pastor's children.

During the game Santosh stepped back and stretched to catch the ball. Suddenly he lost his balance and fell backward off the roof. "Lord, save me!" he cried as he tumbled toward some high voltage wires.

*Continued next week*



*The Karikalan family (left).  
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