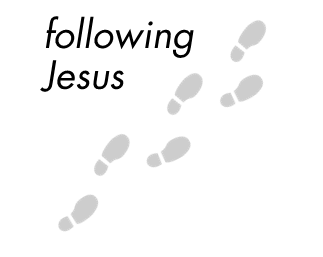


***Wednesday Night Bible Study***

Spring Creek Church of Christ



*Introduction*

***Follow Jesus***

*How Jesus formed his disciples into people who changed their world*

The word disciple means, “Follower, learner, apprentice.” In Jesus’ day, it described a student who walked through the events of daily life with their teacher. They watched how their teacher lived, listened to how he talked, and interacted with him in a variety of situations. This became a form of instruction that went far beyond a set of facts delivered in a classroom. These truths bubbled up out of the lab of daily life. They were truths first spoken, then tested in the field. The goal of all worthy illumination is the practicality of a wise walk.

It is this form of teaching Jesus used to train His closest disciples. Yes, He often spoke to the crowds. At times, He paused to help a stranger. However, the way Jesus chose to mold those closest to him into people who would change their world is through the process of *discipleship*.

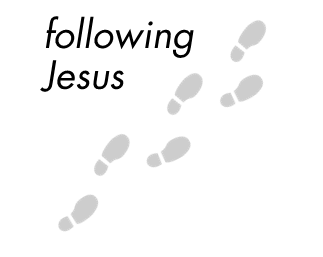
What exactly did Jesus do with these people He chose to disciple? What did they see in Jesus that transformed them into people of such faith? What stories, what principles, what anthems did Jesus teach them that changed their perspective of themselves and their world?

Those are the wonderful questions we will endeavor to answer in this study. To do this we will examine the texts where *Jesus transformed the Twelve*—His apostles. They were the special objects of his discipleship. It is our passionate desire to be formed, as they were, by Jesus. We want to see what they saw, hear what they heard, sit where they sat, so we might be formed by the Master as they were, so that people may look at us and say, “They have been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Then may our Master release us into the world to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

Strap on your sandals and let’s walk on the path of a disciple. Our place is close to the side of our Lord. Our hearts race when we hear His words. Our eyes open wide to see His actions. “Lord, make us like you!”

To His glory!

Tim Jennings



***“Come and See”***

*The Seeking Nature of a Disciple –* John 1:19-51

*Lesson #1*

The best students are characterized by a curious nature. They gladly assume the position of humble inquisitors probing for greater understanding. This aspect of learning does not require a superior intellect. It demands a simple awareness of our own lacking and a desire to learn. This aching awareness of what we lack, matched with an insatiable craving to learn, has probably fueled more discoveries than the efforts of a thousand geniuses.

This longing to learn is what characterized the first four men who followed Jesus. Their story is found in John 1. Their desire to learn first led them to a man named John. In him they saw a passion for righteousness which differed with the surface, self-centered religion of their day. His message was rooted in the voice of God, not the wills of the people. But most of all, John told them about the One who was coming to really change things—God’s Son, who would become God’s Lamb. The four disciples were so well prepared by John’s instruction that when Jesus came on the scene they eagerly became His disciples.

The first question Jesus asked them was, “What do you seek?” (John 1:38). Jesus is pointing out a key feature of genuine disciples—they are seekers! That is a good question, isn’t it? What do you seek? It is a sobering, probing question every person must answer before they can become a disciple of Jesus. If we are seeking pleasure, wealth, power, or fame, we will be unaffected by this Man from Nazareth. Discipleship is about “seeking” Jesus. The area of our curiosity, the object of our cravings, is Jesus! Who is He? What does He teach? How does He live? (One of Jesus’ key slogans was, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).)

|  |
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| To those who seek to be with Jesus, he graciously responds, “Come and see!” We have been accepted into the highest academy, the most acclaimed school. |

“What do you seek?” Jesus asked the two disciples. They wisely replied, “Rabbi, where are *you* staying?” (John 1:38). In other words, “We seek to be with *you*.” May that be our desire as well. We want to be with you Lord. We seek You!

To those who seek to be with Jesus, he graciously, wondrously responds, “Come and see!” How great! We have been accepted into the highest academy, the most acclaimed school. We get to rub shoulders with none less than the Son of God, whose sandal strap we are not even worthy to untie. Yet, he says to us, “Come and see!” What joy!

What is even more wonderful is to find that that Jesus is happy for us to invite our friends to “come and see” as well. And so, they did. Andrew invited his brother, and Philip called a friend with the same words Jesus used, “come and see” (John 1:46), Then, with the same humble curiosity of a seeker they too went to be with Jesus.

The story of these four disciples in John 1 teaches us a great deal about the indispensable quality of *seeking*. It is the first tool of a disciple, and it is one he never outgrows. Read the text and consider the following discussion questions.

**Read: John 1:19-51**

*(Also, Read Matthew 3:1-12 for background into John’s ministry)*

**Disciples Are Seekers**

The four disciples in this text were seekers. They excitedly see where Jesus is saying and listen to what he says. From their example we can learn many characteristics of seeking truth.

**#1 Seekers Are Eager to Learn**

***First Example: John’s Disciples (John 1:19-24)***

Two of the disciples who sought after Jesus were first disciples of John. They proved they were seekers of truth before they ever met Jesus. What were these seekers finding in John that was so appealing? (Review John 1:19-34 & Matthew 3:1-12)

*John’s Message*: List at least four things that characterized John’s message.

#1

#2

#3

#4

#...

How did John’s message prepare them to seek after Jesus?

How can these characteristics be seen in our lives today?

*John’s Life*: Remember, disciples learn by watching how their teachers lived, not just what they said. How did John’s *life* prepare them to follow Jesus?

***Seekers Are Eager to Learn…***

***Second Example: The Two Disciples and Jesus (John 1:35-39)***

An unnamed disciple and Andrew left John to follow Jesus. They made several decisions that demonstrate they were seeking Jesus (John 1:35-39).

What decisions did the two disciples make in these verses that showed they were seeking after Jesus?

***Seekers Are Eager to Learn…***

***Third Example: Philip Invites Nathanael (John 1:43-46)***

When Nathanael first heard of Jesus he found it hard to believe God could use someone from such a small, despised place as Nazareth. Yet he “came and saw” Jesus, and in the end confessed, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

What was there in Nathanael that caused him to seek Jesus, even though he had his doubts?

**#2 Seekers Share What They Learn**

A crucial characteristic in these seeking disciples is their excitement to share what they learned. At first, this comes as a shock that disciples are in the sharing business. Since the essence of discipleship is learning, we might think that sharing is for teachers not learners. Yet, right from the beginning these seekers became sharers.

Why is sharing what we learn so important to the role of a seeker?

***First Example: John (John 1:6-8, 15, 19-36)***

What can we learn from John that can help us share what we learn about Jesus? (Review John 1:6-8, 15, 19-36)

***Second Example: Andrew (John 1:40-42)***

What can we learn from Andrew that can help us share what we learn from Jesus? (Review John 1:40-42a)

***Third Example: Philip (John 1:43-46)***

What can we learn from Philip that can help us share what we learn from Jesus? (Review John 1:43-46)

**#3 Jesus Knows the Hearts Of The Seekers**

John 2:25 says, “Jesus has no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knows what is in man.” Jesus knowledge of people’s hearts is clearly shown in John 1. These four disciples came to understand that Jesus already knew them much better than they knew Him.

The question Jesus asks the **two disciples**, “What do you seek?” (John 1:38), shows that Jesus is much more interested in our motives than mere actions. When Jesus met **Peter,** He showed insight into Peter’s character and potential when He said, “You are Simon, you will be Peter” (John 1:42). Likewise, Jesus showed complete knowledge of **Nathanael**, a man he had not met in the flesh, yet knew. Jesus knew Nathaniel to be a man of integrity, and He knew where Nathaniel had been and even what he was thinking (John 1:47-48).

Jesus knows the hearts of His seekers perfectly. How does this knowledge affect the way we seek after Jesus? Come up with at least three ways…

#1

#2

#3

*Application*: How will this knowledge affect the way you pray, worship, study, and serve?

Pray,

Worship,

Study,

Serve,

**#4 Jesus Can Change the Life of Seekers**

The lives of these five men were fundamentally changed by seeking after Jesus. That point is made clearly in the example of Peter. When Jesus met Peter, not only did He know Peter’s name (then Simon), but Jesus knew what He would become Cephas – a Stone; a solid, dependable believer. And so, he did. When Jesus met Nathanael he went from skeptic to believer.

When we seek after Jesus it will change us. This can be scary. This change often meets with resistance from within us and outside of us. But, ***to seek after Jesus we must change***.

Examine the lives of the five disciples John 1 and ask, “What attitudes and actions must we have to make change possible?”

While talking to Nathanael, Jesus refers to the story of Jacob’s dream (John 1:51; Genesis 28:10-22). Jacob was known as a man of deceit (“guile”). Yet, God took him from Jacob, the “supplanter” to Israel, the “prince of God” (Gen. 32:22-32). If God could change Jacob what could He do with Nathanael?

If change is a gage of seeking, then would we describe ourselves as seekers?

*Application*: To follow Jesus I must be ready to change myself. Today I need to change these areas…

#1

#2

#3

**#5 Jesus Can Exceed the Expectations of Seekers**

Nathaniel is so overwhelmed by Jesus’ knowledge of him he quickly pronounces a powerful truth—Jesus is the Son of God and King of Israel. While his faith is very new, Jesus assures Nathaniel that he has only seen a small amount of the work of God. Jesus makes Nathaniel a promise He will see much more of the power and glory of God.

Jesus makes seekers promises. What role do these promises have in helping seekers stay seekers? In other words, how do the promises of God keep the fire of seeking after the Lord alive in us? Come up with at least three ways….

#1

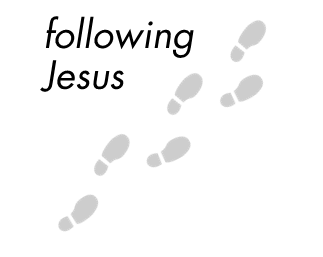
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#3

How does the next story about Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana show that He can exceed the expectations of seekers? (See John 2:1-12).

What promise of God makes you want to keep seeking after Him?

***Application***: Seekers rest on the promises of God to maintain their pursuit in the perplexing moments of life. So, next time my zeal for seeking grows dim I will remember the promises of God.



***Leave All***

*Disciples let go of lesser activities to follow Jesus*

*Lesson #2*

*Calling Four Fishermen (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11)*

*Calling A Tax Collector (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32)*

It is hard to go somewhere without leaving where you are. That is why *leaving* is essential to growing. To be disciples of Jesus we must be willing to *leave* the way things are to *become* what the Lord wants us to be.

Leaving is such a necessary quality of discipleship you can’t be saved without it. The message of the gospel is introduced with the word, *“Repent”* (Mark 1:4,15). The kingdom of God is for leavers. Disciples are people who gladly release the values of the world, to pursue the path of Christ. Their lives are continually *“transformed”* into His image (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2). Following Jesus is not just a scenic path we take when we find time to stray from the highways of our lives. Following Jesus means going off road in an entirely different direction. To be formed into the people Jesus can use to change our world we must get comfortable with leaving!

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| We must be willing to *leave* the way things are to *become* what the Lord wants us to be. |

Ah, but leaving is hard, isn’t it? Nobody likes to say, “Goodbye.” Leaving is hard for a number reasons:

***First, we get comfortable with the way things are*.** I had a box in my garage that sat right in front of my toolbox. Every time I went to get a tool I had to stretch over the box and awkwardly balance myself on one foot to get my tool. I did this for months! I knew the box was bothersome, but I thought, “I don’t have time to deal with it.” I just got used to it. Balancing myself like a gymnast became a part of getting a hammer. When I finally opened the box, I discovered it was paper trash I intended to throw away months ago. It took 10 seconds to put it in the trash and my gymnast days were over.

So many disciples have obstacles in their lives that hinder their service for Christ. We have friendships, hobbies, activities, and routines that are as comfortable as an old recliner. Leaving those things would be uncomfortable. So, we maintain the status quo and Jesus becomes nothing more than a roadside attraction, rather than our destination! Leaving requires discomfort, but to disciples the discomfort has the joyful smell of growth.

***Second, leaving puts us out of step with the world.*** Jesus told His disciples, *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”* (John 15:18). Few enjoy being weird. It is easier to blend in. In fact, blending it seems wise. I mean, “Everyone loves that movie, is crazy about that sport, and everyone’s family does that activity” for a reason, right? Before long we look like everybody else.

Yet, disciples are called to leave the world. We delight in those grating moments when someone says, “You mean you don’t know that? You don’t do this?” and we get the look that says, “You’re a bit off, aren’t you?” Ah, that’s the moment which confirms we are becoming more like Jesus.

***Thirdly, leaving is hard because it is scary.*** We fear what will happen if we leave worldly wisdom behind and just follow Jesus—lock, stock and barrel. Our fear causes us to follow Jesus just as far as we can still hold on to the world.

There was a 10-foot brick fence around the backyard of my boyhood home. As children, it was a great challenge to see who had the courage to climb up on that fence and walk all the way across. It was only four inches wide at the top. We climbed to the top of the fence using a telephone pole. Three feet away from the pole was a tree. Four feet in front of that was a shed. After that nothing but a thin wall and blue sky. We usually did a good job walking the fence until we got past the tree and the shed. But once we didn’t have anything to hold on to our courage faded and we fell!

Disciples of Jesus often find themselves in situations where they ask, “Can I do this?” “What will happen to my children if we don’t do what other families do?” “Will I really be happy if I give that up?” Disciples feel the *fear* and then they exercise their *faith* and let go anyway! Why? Because they trust the One they follow is with them on the wisest path.

To be disciples of Jesus we must be willing to *leave* the way things are to *become* what the Lord wants us to be. After all, Jesus left everything to make us what we ought to be. Frances Havergal envisioned what Jesus’ left with these words,

My Father’s house of light, My glory circled throne  
I left for earthly night, for wanderings sad and lone;  
I left, I left it all for thee, hast thou left aught for Me?  
I left, I left it all for thee, hast thou left aught for Me?

(Frances Havergal “I Gave My Life For Thee”)

Good question? Disciples have learned from their Lord that leaving is the only path to growing.

**Disciples Are Leavers…the Texts**

In this lesson, we see what leaving involves as we watch Jesus call disciples to follow Him. To “*follow*” they must first *leave* things behind. These disciples become an example of what we must leave to follow Jesus.

There was a period time when the disciples were with Jesus only occasionally (John 2). They would take trips with Jesus, listen to Jesus, watch Him perform miracles, but then they came back home to the way things were. But there came a time when Jesus called them to leave their old life behind and follow Him *totally*. That time came one day for four fishermen and a tax collector. It is their story we will examine in this lesson.

What made them make the decision to leave? Many people find themselves in that initial stage of discipleship. They are with the Lord occasionally. They listen to Jesus speak, they watch His works, they may even take a trip or two with Him, but then it’s back to the old life of living like the world. If we are going to be changed into the kind of people who can change our world for Christ we must be willing to take the next step! We must be willing to leave…leave the lesser activities to serve the Lord totally.

There are at least *five* things involved in leaving which are illustrated in these accounts. Before discuss them, let’s examine the text.

**The Four Fishermen**

**Read: Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 4:18-22** | **Mark 1:16-20** |
| What were the disciples doing? |  |  |
| What did Jesus say? |  |  |
| How did the disciples respond? |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Luke 5:1-11** |
| What did Jesus do for the crowds? (:1-3) |  |
| What did Jesus tell Simon to do? (:4) |  |
| How did Simon respond? (:5) |  |
| What was the result of obeying Jesus? (:6-7) |  |
| How did Simon, and the others respond to the miracle? (:8-9) |  |
| What did Jesus tell them to do? (:10) |  |
| How did they respond? (:11) |  |

**The Tax Collector**

**Read: Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32**

How different is this tax collector from the four fishermen?

#1

#2

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Why do you think Jesus choose men who were so different from each other to follow Him?

**Understanding the Text….**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Matthew 9:9-13** | **Mark 2:13-17** | **Luke 5:27-32** |
| Where was Levi (Matthew) sitting? |  |  |  |
| What did Jesus say? |  |  |  |
| How did Levi immediate respond? |  |  |  |
| What did Levi do after he started following Jesus? |  |  |  |
| What did the scribes and Pharisees think about Jesus being with Levi and his friends? |  |  |  |
| What did Jesus say was His purpose? |  |  |  |

Now, let’s use this understanding from the text to make some applications!

**Disciples Are Leavers…the Applications**

One of the things these accounts have in common is the word “left.” When the four fishermen understood who Jesus was they *“left behind all and followed Him”* (Luke 5:11). To follow Jesus Levi must first *“leave all”* (Luke 5:28). These disciples illustrate how leaving lesser activities is essential to following Jesus. Their brave example highlights five things involved in leaving all for Christ.

**#1 Leaving Involves Knowing Jesus**

***Example: The Four Fishermen***

From these accounts it seems like Jesus just walks by and says *“Follow Me,”* and these guys leave all. However, before “leaving all” these men got to know Jesus. They first met Jesus and listened to Him speak and were amazed at His great knowledge (John 1:35-51). Peter saw Jesus heal his mother-in-law in an instant (Matt. 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). In Luke 5 they continue to learn about Jesus.

**Question:** In Luke 5 the four fishermen learn about Jesus in what two ways?

#1 (Luke 5:1)

#2 (Luke 5:5-8)

**Question:** In Luke 5 what did the fishermen learn about Jesus?

**Application:** Why is knowing Jesus an important prerequisite to leaving all to follow Him?

What do you know about Jesus which gives you confidence to leave things?

**#2 Leaving Involves Counting the Cost**

***Example: The Four Fishermen & The Tax Collector***

On one occasion Jesus told His disciples, *“whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple”* (Luke 14:33). Jesus knew that leaving all would be challenging, so He encouraged His disciples to *“sit down and count the cost”* (Luke 14:28-32). Jesus wants us to know up front there is a cost in leaving and following. Some will fear the cost and settle for a partial discipleship, which is no discipleship at all.

Think about what the disciples in our text gave up to follow the Lord.

**Question:** Look through the text and ask yourself, “What did the four fishermen give up to serve the Lord?”

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#5

**Question:** Look through the text and ask yourself, “What did the tax collector give up to serve the Lord?”

#1

#2

#3

#4

#5

**Application:** Is there a cost to your discipleship? How do we feel about that cost? They gave up boats and tables, but what kind of things must we give up in our current society to follow Jesus?

**#3 Leaving Involves Knowing the Hopelessness of Where You Are**

***Example: The Four Fishermen***

The cost of leaving all to follow Jesus seems small when we consider the hopelessness of our condition without Him. The four fishermen gave up a lot to follow Jesus, but they gladly did it because they understood how hopeless they were without Him.

**Question:** In Luke 5 how good were they at fishing without Jesus? How good were they at fishing with Jesus? How would this encourage them to follow Jesus?

**Question:** When Peter understood who Jesus was what did he learn about himself? (Luke 5:8)

**Question:** Think about Levi, how could a wealthy tax collector feel like he needed Jesus so much he is willing to leave all to follow Him?

**Application:** What is hopeless in your life without Jesus?

How does this awareness of our need motivate us to leave all?

**#4 Leaving Involves Having a Traveling Companion**

***Example: The Four Fishermen & The Tax Collector***

Another thing these accounts have in common is Jesus called the disciples with the same words, *“Follow Me.”* He was not just calling them to leave all. He was calling them to be *with* Him.

**Application:** How does the knowledge that you will be *with Jesus* make leaving things easier?

**#5 Leaving Involves Caring About Other People’s Souls**

***Example: The Four Fishermen & The Tax Collector***

Now we have a full picture of the steps involved in leaving all to follow Jesus. Jesus calls us to leave because we *need* Him. Even though it’s *costly* we leave all to follow Him because we will be *with Him*. But following Jesus is not just a nice new relationship with Jesus. We are called to be *with* Him, *for* others! In both of these accounts Jesus calls His disciples for the purpose of caring about other people’s souls!

**Question:** Jesus called the four fishermen to follow Him, so they could become “fishers of men” (Luke 5:10). What is meant by “fishers of men”?

**Question:** Jesus called Levi to follow Him, and the very first thing Levi did was invite all his friends over to his house to meet Jesus (Luke 5:29). Why would he do this?

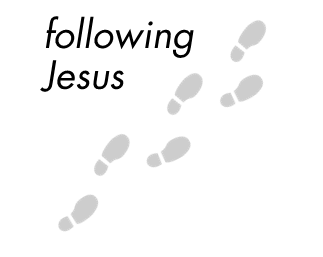
How do the Pharisees feel about Jesus’ interest in people’s souls?

**Application:** What are we doing in our following of Jesus which is helping the souls of others?

How are we tempted to think that discipleship is not about *souls*?

What can we start doing to make sure we leave lesser things to serve the greater needs of people’s souls?

* What does this look like in our families?
* What does this look like in the church?
* What does this look like at work / with our friends?
* What does this look like in my neighborhood?



***Do Not Fear***

*Disciples courageously obey Jesus*

*Lesson #3*

*Choosing the Twelve (Matthew 9:35-10:4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16)*

*Sending & Instructing the Twelve (Matthew 10:5-42; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6)*

The modern portrait of a disciple lives in tranquil halls and sits in comfortable pews. Believers are promised enjoyable experiences that fit in their schedules with no cost or obligation. One church defended their appeal to people’s pleasures by saying, “We’re competing against recliners and televisions, theaters, and sporting events. People don’t want to hear, “Come and bleed!”” The mere suggestion that following Jesus is demanding drives away the crowds. So we preach ease and end up with a couch potato Christianity that is as pleasant as it is useless!

When Jesus called twelve men to change the world He didn’t promise them elaborate robes and convenient hours. He promised them exhaustion and fierce opposition. Today following Jesus is defined in terms of *convenience*. In the New Testament discipleship was defined in terms of *courage*. Being a disciple is not for the fainthearted or the fragile. Discipleship demands bravery. It’s about having the courage to go against conventional wisdom and speak the truth.

In Matthew 10 Jesus called twelve men to the ardent demands of discipleship. He called them to preach the kingdom of heaven and do battle against the forces of hell. He didn’t promise them ease. He assured them of pain. They would have to be brave believers to take the task, but Jesus called them onward saying, “Do not fear!” and He gave them solid reasons to live with courage. Understanding those reasons for courage is at the heart of this study. Our prayer is that courage may find its rightful place at the heart of our discipleship! Our world is waiting for what God can do once again through a few brave believers like us.

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| --- |
| If we want to be more courageous in our faith, we need to be more committed to the Object of our faith. |

Before we begin to examine the text, there are a few important factors about courage we need to consider if we’re going to head off in the right direction. ***First, the disciple’s courage is rooted in who Jesus is.*** The kind of courage we are talking about in this study is not generated by manly bravado. It does not come from muscles or intellect. It comes from a confidence in Christ. We get our boldness from who *He is* and what *He has promised*. In this way, even the most petite and physically weak believer can wield the mighty sword of courage. We will see valor arise from the text every time we act upon His wisdom and trust in His promise. So in the end, this courage does not create praise merely for the soldier who followed behind, but for the Commander whose knowledge and daring led the way. Simply put, if we want to be more courageous in our faith we need to be more committed to the Object of our faith. Walking with Him at our side causes us to not fear what anyone else might do to us.

***Secondly, courage is the result of training and example*.** We do not become courageous disciples because of a study. It is the result of constant study and practice. In Matthew 10 Jesus called twelve men, and it looks like He immediately sent them out on a very courageous adventure. Yet, if you consider Mark and Luke’s account Jesus called the twelve to be with Him and they spent several months listening to His teaching and seeing His miracles before Jesus sent them into the fray. They had to witness Jesus’ courage before they could express their own.

An army is not made courageous by simply going to the battlefield. They must first be taught, strengthened, and put through drills. Similarly, Jesus instilled courage in His disciples through instruction and practice—He taught them and sent them, and did it again. Yet, even with this training their courage still failed at times, most notably at the cross. Yet, they learned that courage is not about never getting knocked down, but never staying down. Similarly, we must pursue courage as a lifelong process in which we simply grow stronger.

***Finally,* before we enter the text, consider the wonderful truth that *courage is contagious*!** The courage that Jesus instilled in this small group of twelve men stirred the zeal of thousands more. May it do so in us!

*Give me some men who are stout-hearted men,*

*Who will fight, for the right they adore,*

*Start me with ten who are stout-hearted men,*

*And I'll soon give you ten thousand more.*

*Shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder,*

*They grow as they go to the fore.*

*Then there's nothing in the world can halt or mar a plan,*

*When stout-hearted men can stick together man to man.*

*“Stout-hearted Men”* by Sigmund Romberg/Oscar Hammerstein

**Disciples Are Courageous**

Please read Matthew 9:35–10:39 and consider the following points with a desire to create within yourself a greater courage to serve the Lord. *(Parallel accounts will be included in the study as they add new information.)*

**#1 Why Is Courage Needed?**

***Souls Are at Stake! Read Matthew 9:35-38***

These verses tell us what motivated Jesus to select the twelve. He was going from city to city preaching and healing the sick, and the text says, *“He was moved with compassion for them”* (Matt. 9:36). This compassion caused Him to tell His disciples to pray to God for helpers. Later that day, He spent all night in prayer about this need (Luke 6:12). The next morning, He chose the twelve. Jesus wanted these twelve men to be courageous because souls were at stake. People would wander away and be lost if someone wasn’t daring enough to go teach them.

**Question:** What souls are there around us that need us to have a courageous faith? Be specific. List names and specific groups.

*These are the souls we are fighting for. In the same way as a picture of a loved one, or a patriotic look at the flag causes a solider to leap into service, so our love for these souls emboldens our words and work.*

**Question:** What role does “compassion” play in creating courage? How can we develop a compassion like Christ’s?

**Question:** What role does prayer play in finding courageous labors?

*(Note Matt. 9:38 – “Lord of Harvest…send out…His harvest.”)*

*(Note also Luke 9:12 – Jesus prayer. What was He praying for all night?)*

*(Note also John 17 – Jesus prayer. “keep them…give them…sanctify them”)*

*(Note also Acts 1:24-25 – The disciples prayed before selecting a man to replace Judas.)*

*Why Is Courage Needed?*

***The Opposition Is Fierce & Destructive! Read Luke 5:12 – 6:11***

In Luke’s gospel, the events leading up to Jesus selecting the twelve reveal another reason why Jesus needed courageous disciples—the opposition against Jesus was fierce and deadly. In Luke’s gospel the selection of the twelve is preceded by six straight stories about how the scribes and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus for the things He was teaching and the miracles He was performing. That section culminates in this terrible statement, *“They [Scribes and Pharisees] were filled with rage, and they discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus”* (Luke 6:11). Then Luke says, *“It came to pass in those days…”* that Jesus chose the twelve (Luke 6:12).

The opposition Jesus faced led to the need for friends for two reasons. *First*, because one day the enemies would be successful in killing Jesus and He would need someone to carry on in His place. There is no coincidence that Jesus gave them the same mission He, Himself had been doing—teach the gospel of the Kingdom and heal the sick (see Matt. 9:35, 10:1). When He was taken out of the way they would need to continue.

*Second*, Jesus needed these disciples to be courageous because they too would face the same persecution Jesus faced. In Matthew 10:25 Jesus said, *“It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!”* If Jesus got a cross, what would they get?

*(See next page for questions)*

**Question:** How do you find the “ways of Jesus” opposed in …

Our culture:

The workplace:

The home:

The church:

What method(s) does the opposition use?

**#2 Who Were the Courageous?**

***The Selection of The Twelve. Read Matthew 10:1-4***

After you see the great *need* for courageous disciples you would expect the names of those enlisted to be people of formidable might and talent. What you find is a list of common, uneducated people from “no-where-ville” Palestine. Yet, in their selection we find many powerful truths about what makes a courageous disciple.

***The Timing of This Selection*.** It is interesting to note that Jesus did not select these men to be “the twelve” at the beginning of His public ministry. No, *at first* they were simply disciples who came to listen to Jesus when their lives allowed (John 1:35-51). *Later*, Jesus called them to follow Him more consistently as disciples (as with Peter, James, John and Matthew in our last lesson – Luke 5:1-11,27-32). *Finally*, Jesus chose them to be a group of twelve who would be with Jesus full time. Most Bible students agree that the selection of the twelve took place 12 to 18 months before Jesus’ crucifixion (before the feeding of the five thousand and the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6)). The choosing of the twelve took place toward the end of Jesus’ period of popularity when many disciples turned away from Jesus and the opposition increased (see John 6:66-67, John uses the term “The twelve” in contrast with those who left). Time was short and the twelve needed to pay careful attention, which is good advice for us as well.

***The Number of The Selection*.** Jesus chose twelve men from among the many disciples who were present that day (Luke 6:13, *“He called His disciples to Him; and from them He chose twelve”*). He obviously could have chosen more. He certainly could have done with less. But Jesus chose twelve. This is a clear indication that Jesus is starting a new nation with a new covenant. Just as there were twelve tribes at the origin of physical Israel, so there are twelve apostles at the beginning of the church. Jesus makes this connection in Matthew 19:28, *“So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* The number of apostles was a living rebuke to the defiant religious leaders indicating that the judgment of physical Israel was at hand, and a new “nation” of God’s people was being established.

***The Order of The List*.** The names of the twelve apostles are given four times in Scripture (Matthew 9:35-10:4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:13)*.* Even though they come from the pen of three different authors the order of the names is remarkably similar. The list can be divided into three groups of four names. The names are listed in order from the most well known, to the least well known, with the most infamous at the end—Judas. The list of apostles is given below along with their description given in Scripture.

**First Group**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Simon Peter | The man of rock |
| Andrew | Who brought people to Jesus, and Peter’s brother |
| James | Sons of Zebedee, and sons of thunder |
| John |

**Second Group**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Philip | The earnest inquirer |
| Bartholomew, or Nathanael | An Israelite of integrity |
| Thomas | The pessimist |
| Matthew | The tax collector |

**Third Group**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| James | The son of Alphaeus (James the Less, Mark 15:40?) |
| Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus, Judas the son of James | The three-named disciple |
| Simon | The Zealot |
| Judas Iscariot | The traitor |

***The Unity of The List Teaches*.** There are two names on the list of apostles you can hardly imagine being in the same room. One’s name was Matthew. He was a tax collector who worked for the Roman occupying force. He was considered a traitor and thief by his fellow countrymen. The other was a political zealot named Simon. He hated the Romans, but no one ranked higher on his hit list than the Jews who became tax collectors. Yet, now their names are forever linked together as one in the list of Apostles. They found a higher allegiance than political or economic concerns—faith in Jesus Christ.

The twelve are an illustration of the church in miniature. All people can now find unity with each other regardless of race, country, language, economic standing, or political philosophy. When we come to Christ we find a truth more transcendent than any ambitions of men. In Him we are one (John 17:20-21).

In addition, it was not only these polar opposites that demonstrated the oneness of the apostolic group. All twelve of them had their challenge with unity. They fought and competed for preeminence often (Mark 10:35-45). But, after the death and resurrection of Jesus they stood together preaching the gospel (Acts 2:14, *“Peter, standing up with the eleven.”*). The unity they learned to extend to each other we must learn to express ourselves. Our names are listed in heaven, and we must demonstrate that unity on earth.

**Question:** Unity among the *leaders* is essential if there is to be unity in the church. What attitudes and actions challenge the unity of the leaders in a local church? What can be done to address this challenge?

What kind of things challenge the unity among God’s people? How can be done to address these challenges?

***Differing Gifts in The List*.** Not every disciple in the list had a type A, Quarterback quality about them. James and John evidently had a fiery disposition, but Thomas was more of a pessimist. Peter may have been more outspoken than some, and Andrew was more comfortable bringing people to Jesus and letting Him do the talking. Some were well known, others we know little or nothing about.

In this way the twelve were the church in miniature. They did not all possess the same gifts, but they used all they had for the service of God. This is the way it is to be in the church (*“Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel”* (1 Cor. 14:12)). God’s people do not need to have the same personality or talents, but they must be people of courageous faith.

**Question:** When spiritual leaders were chosen in the New Testament their spiritual character was the main consideration (Acts 6:3-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-16). As you consider the leadership the Twelve provided for the early church what spiritual quality do you believe lead to their success?

***The Great God Behind the List*.** The names on this list were never on the dean’s role in some respected university. They were not listed in the Forbes 500. They are common men with simple talents. That doesn’t mean God can’t use the popular or educated—the apostle Paul shows He can. Yet, even with Paul and certainly with the men on this list their effectiveness did not come from them. The very fact they were successful in spreading the gospel is proof that God was with them! As Paul would later write, *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God”* (2 Cor. 3:5). The weakness of the human vessel is never the issue. The One in whom we trust and serve is more than able to take us, as weak as we might be, and use our service to accomplish His purposes. The apostles are not worthy to be put on pedestals and worshiped, but the Lord who worked through them is!

**#3 How Is Courage Learned?**

***The Mission of The Twelve. Read Matthew 10:5-41;***

***Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6***

It is one thing to know you need to be courageous, but it is another thing to know *how* to be courageous. When Jesus chose the twelve He went about doing the things that would instill within them the needed courage. He allowed them to be around Him and see His *example*. He gave them *instruction* on how to be courageous. And then, He sent them out onto the practice field to *exercise* what they learned. (Example, Educate, and Exercise, that’s a good formula for successful training!)

In this section we will discover the things Jesus did to instill courage in these rather common men, with the hope that these truths will also instill courage in us.

***Courage Is Learned By Being With Jesus. Read Mark 3:13-14***

In Mark’s account we are told that Jesus chose the twelve that they might be with Him. *“He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 14Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him”* (Mark 3:13-14). This verse teaches us the importance of example in the education process. We reproduce who we are more than what we say. This means that example is of paramount importance.

From Matthew’s account the student would think that Jesus chose the Twelve and immediately sent them out to preach and heal. However, when you consider Mark and Luke’s record you find that the Twelve were with Jesus for some time before He sent them out on their own. During that time the Twelve heard Jesus teach the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:17-49), and they watched Jesus heal many people. Preaching and healing, those were the two missions Jesus would give the twelve. They were equipped to do these works because they first saw Jesus do them.

In the same way, the process of getting God’s people to take on a new task must begin with the leaders setting the example.

**Question:** In what specific ways can *you* be an example to others that will enable them to serve more effectively?

***Courage Is Gained Through Teaching. Read Matthew 10:5-7; Mark 3:13-14***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

The primary task Jesus sent the disciples out to accomplish is to preach, *“The kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 10:7). Of course, they did not dream up this message, it was the very message they heard Jesus peach (*“Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people”* (Matt. 4:23; 9:35)). Teaching is an essential prerequisite to changed lives. You can watch someone’s example for a long time and still not know why they do what they do. They must tell you. This is why instruction is so essential, it provides the *why*; the motive for good behavior.

**Question:** What is there about teaching others the truths you’ve learned about Jesus that makes you grow? (Consider Heb. 5:12 and 1 Tim. 3:2 in regard to the connection between growth and teaching.)

*How Is Courage Learned?*

***Courage Is Gained Through Knowing God Is With You.***

***Read Matthew 10:5-7; Mark 3:13-14***

Jesus gave the Twelve the ability to do miracles, *“heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons”* (Matt. 10:8). This miraculous ability certainly gave them courage to teach anywhere, because the miracles were evidence that God was with them—therefore their words were from God.

We do not have the ability to do miracles today. Nevertheless, we are just as certain that the words we speak are from God and that God is with us as we serve Him (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Matt. 28:20). We can have the same boldness to speak and serve in Jesus’ name, knowing that the all-powerful God is with us. If He is the God who can heal sicknesses, and overcome death, then His word can certainly heal the soul’s sins and bring eternal life back to those slain by sin.

**Question:** How do the following promises give you courage to serve the Lord more boldly?

*“I plant, Apollos waters, but God gave the increase”* (1 Corinthians 3:6)

*“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”* (Ephesians 3:20) (How does knowing God is working with you change your praying?)

*“If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.”* (1 Pet. 4:11) (If God is giving you the ability, who deserves the praise?)

***Courageous Disciples!***

1. Serve **people** in need, “the lost sheep.” (Matt. 10:5-6)

2. **Preach** the word. The urgency of the kingdom, “at hand.” (Matt. 10:7)

3. With **power**. The apostles had miraculous power, we have the power of a godly example (Matt. 10:8)

*"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 4:19)

*How Is Courage Learned?*

***Courage Is Gained Through Working With A Partner. Read Mark 6:7***

Mark’s account of the sending of the Twelve tells us, *“He called the Twelve to Him, and began to send them out two by two”* (Mark 6:7). Jesus knew there was a spiritual advantage to believers working together to accomplish a task. The early church continued this precedent. When the Holy Spirit wanted the gospel to go to the Gentile world He selected two, *“Paul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them”* (Acts 13:2). God chose that elders, plural, where to shepherd a local congregation. While man-made structures tend to elevate one man to a position of power like President or CEO, God’s kingdom works by people teaming together to do the work as fellow servants.

**Question:** List several benefits that come from disciples working together to accomplish God’s work.

#1

#2

#3

#4

#5… etc

***Courage Is The Result Of Receiving Grace. Read Matthew 10:8***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

Jesus sent the Twelve out with this motto ringing in their ears, *“Freely you have received, freely give”* (Matt. 10:8). This reminded them that the word they spoke and the deeds they did, did not come from them, but from God. They were recipients of grace. God didn’t have to reveal His will. He didn’t have to use them. Yet He graciously chose to do both!

In addition to freely *receiving*, they were to freely *give*. They were to give their message free of charge, not deciding who was “worthy” of their efforts. If God put someone in front of them it was their responsibility to give them the gracious message and serve them graciously, because that is how God treated them!

**Question:** What is there about receiving God’s grace that should make us bold in serving the Lord?

**Question:** How do prejudices hinder our service to the Lord?

What types of prejudice affect our service today?

***To Be Courageous Travel Light. Read Matthew 10:9-10***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

Possessions are like sinkholes that suck the life out of our courage. We are much less likely to speak courageously for the Lord, or serve boldly in His name if we think we will lose our home, our job, our TV.

Jesus knows the tendency of our possessions to squelch our service so His instruction is, “Travel light!” He tells the twelve how to pack. He says, “No need for a checkbook or credit card. Just a change of clothes, your tennis shoes, and a walking stick will be enough.” They had few things to lose if their message was rejected, so they could just focus on speaking truth.

Not only did Jesus remove the obstacle of possessions, but He asks them to trust that He will provide if they are obedient. He said, *“a worker is worthy of his food”* (Matt. 10:10). Jesus promises that their needs would be met through His people. Since they didn’t have to worry about a wheel barrel of stuff, and they believed that God would provide for them, they were free to be courageous.

**Question:** For those who are financially supported to preach the gospel it is a constant temptation to conform the message to the desires of the hearers lest it affect their salary. How can ministers of the gospel remain courageous in teaching God’s word, even when their support is at stake? (Remember stockpiling stuff runs counter to this text.)

**Question:** How can the things we own keep us from living boldly for Jesus today? Should we travel lighter? How do we start?

***To Be Courageous Focus On The Receptive & Trust God With The Rest. Read Matthew 10:11-15***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

Few things drain the joy and zeal out of service to God like a few cantankerous people. When I first began to preach, I would preach a lesson and receive many encouraging responses, but just let one person say, “I think that stinks!” and it was all I thought about for weeks.

Yet, courageous disciples cannot focus on how the message is received, but on the faithfulness in which it was delivered. Jesus told the twelve not to be preoccupied with those who rejected their work. God will be just in dealing with them. They didn’t need to get revenge. They didn’t need to try to vindicate themselves. God was fully aware of their behavior and says, *““Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord”* (Rom. 12:19).

Disciples stay enthusiastic by rejoicing in the receptive. Jesus tells the twelve to seek out believers who demonstrate their “worthiness” by receiving your word and supporting the truth. Stay close to those people. Trust the rest to God.

**Question:** What are godly and effective ways of dealing with someone who constantly opposes the work of the kingdom? (see Col. 3:12-13; Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10)

**Question:** How does focusing on the faithful make us more courageous?

[The twelve actually lived with those who supported their work. They came home from a hard day of serving in the kingdom to people who loved them and supported them. How encouraging that must have been! Deeper relationships with the faithful can make us more courageous.]

**Summary Of The First Group Of Instructions (Matt. 10:5-15).** This first group of instructions can be summarized by the phrase, “Care not.” In other words, “Stay single-minded in serving the kingdom and do not become distracted by secondary concerns.” Jesus gave them a command, a promise, and a prediction that would help them keep their focus on their task.

*The Command*: *“Go preach saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand””* (Matt. 10:7) A. B. Bruce writes, “He said to them in effect: “Go and learn to seek the kingdom of God with a single heart, unconcerned about food or raiment; for till you can do that you are not fit to be my apostles.”

*The Promise*: *“Provide neither gold nor silver…for a worker is worthy of his food”* (Matt. 10:9-11). Jesus promised their physical needs would be met.

*The Prediction*: *“Whoever will not receive you nor hear your words”* (Matt. 10:13). Jesus was clear their mission would not always be a pleasant one. This understanding caused the Apostles to go to the work braced for opposition.

Do we have the courage to go about God’s work as they did? We have the same command (Matt. 28:18-20), the same promise (Matt. 6:33), the same prediction (2 Tim. 3:12).

**Introduction To The Second Group Of Instructions (Matt. 10:16-42).** Beginning in Matthew 10:16 Jesus’ instruction shift from the present mission of spreading the gospel to Israel to information the twelve will need as they later take the gospel to the world (Matt. 10:5-15, present mission; Matt. 10:16-42, future mission). While the previous section is characterized as, “Care not,” this section is characterized by “Fear not.” The previous section focused on the provision of Christ; this section focuses of the persecution of Christians.

The persecution was not unexpected. Those who call themselves “servants of Christ” should expect the same treatment He experienced. This was Jesus’ point at the heart of this section in verse 24,

“A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they call* those of his household! 26Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.” (Matt. 10:24-26)

That phrase in verse 26, *“Do not fear them”* captures the tenor of Jesus’ instruction to the twelve in this section. The reason He gives them for why they should have courage instead of fear is, *“there is nothing covered that will not be revealed”* (Matt. 10:26). At times it may seem the fortunes of the faithful are bad, yet there will come a reckoning when the reality of things will be revealed. Those who belong to Jesus will be seen as the real victors. This gives us key principle for courage: ***Don’t look a temporary defeats but the ultimate victory!***

**Question:** When we encounter a temporary setback in our service to God how can we realign our thoughts so that we see our ultimate victory? Consider the following setbacks.

Personal sin:

Congregational disunity:

Unkind words:

Unbeliever rejects the gospel:

A believer rejects the truth and goes back to the world:

***To Be Courageous Know What To Speak & When To Run (Matt. 10:16-23)***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

In this section Jesus braces the twelve for the persecution they will face. It will not come from just one source, but from every direction. The command “Do not fear!” is certainly needed in the face of such opposition. Jesus warned them of…

*Religious persecution (Matt. 10:16-17).* From “with in” attack is some of the hardest to face, but not unexpected!

*Political persecution (Matt. 10:18)*. From “without” attack can be sever.

*Family persecution (Matt. 10:21)*. Perhaps the most difficult to endure.

*General persecution (Matt. 10:22-23)*. “From all directions,” in other words.

Jesus gives the twelve a proverb to help guide their courageous service in the kingdom, *“Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves”* (Matt. 10:16).

**Question:** What did Jesus mean by being wise as serpents? How does this relate to working in the kingdom?

**Question:** What did Jesus mean by being harmless as doves? (think of the symbol of the dove in Scripture) How does this relate to working in the kingdom?

Jesus then applies this proverb to the persecution they will face. He tells us what “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” looks like.

**First, it means they should speak the words God would give them.** *“When they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you”* (Matt. 10:19-20). This promise of miraculous inspiration was only intended for the apostles. However, there is a principle here for courageous disciples of any era. *When we are under pressure for the gospel we need to have the courage to speak God’s word.* We will be tempted to use “human wisdom” or try to downplay our faith to escape trouble. It is then we are to have the courage to speak plainly God’s word. In order to do this today we need to have God’s word in our hearts and minds to be ready at the time of need.

**Question:** What words from God could you speak to deal with the following conflicts? What are we sometimes tempted to say instead?

Personal sin:

Congregational disunity:

Unkind words:

Unbeliever rejects the gospel:

A believer rejects the truth and goes back to the world:

**Second, being wise as serpents and harmless as doves means they should know when to run.** *“When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes”* (Matt. 10:23). It would not be the place of disciples to execute judgment on those who did not accept the gospel. When they discerned people thoroughly rejected the gospel they were to take it to the next town (see Matt. 10:14). They were not to be discouraged and give up, but just move on.

**Question:** What signs would indicate it is time to move on to another opportunity to spread the gospel?

***To Be Courageous Know How Much God Cares For You (Matt. 10:27-33)***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

In this section Jesus again commands His disciples, *“Do not fear”* (Matt. 10:28). The reason He gives them for courage is that man’s ability to harm us is only temporary, while God’s judgment is eternal! Yet, God has no desire to judge us. In fact, He cares for us more than we could imagine. While it may seem that disciples are unloved by the world, they need to remember they are deeply loved by the Lord who knows everything about them. Thus, the section ends with the command yet once again, *“do not fear… you are more valuable”* (Matt. 10:31).

**Question:** How does God’s knowledge of you motivate you to live courageously for Him? (Consider both a negative and positive motivation)

**Question:** Jesus goes on to show there is a relationship between our courage to confess Him on earth and His confession of us in heaven. In what way does our confession of Christ under pressure reflect the reality of our relationship with Him?

In what circumstances are we tempted to deny the Lord?

***To Be Courageous Love Jesus More Than All, Even Yourself (Matt. 10:34-39)***

*How Is Courage Learned?*

Jesus again warns the disciples of trouble times because of their faith, *“do not think I came to bring peace on earth”* (10:34). Jesus brought peace between men and God, and between fellow believers. However, this would not translate to peace with the world. In fact, the world is an enemy of God (James 4:4). We must need this reminder often; Jesus gives is many times!

Yet, Jesus reveals the true motivation of courage is love! Those we love the most we will be the most courageous in serving.

**Question:** How are we tempted to love family more than Jesus?

**Question:** How are we tempted to love ourselves more than Jesus?

**Question:** How does the image of a cross create courage within us?

***To Be Courageous Serve Humbly Looking To The Reward (Matt. 10:40-42)***

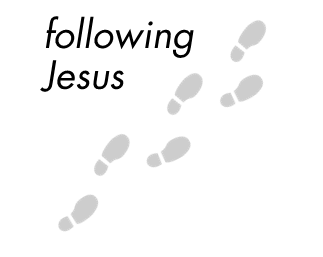
*How Is Courage Learned?*

Jesus ends the section by getting very practical with a few ways we can courageously serve in the kingdom.

*We can courageously receive fellow believers (Matt. 10:40-41)*. This is probably a reference to believers who were traveling to spread the gospel, or who were outcast because of their faith. When we do we are really receiving the Lord to whom they are connected. In addition, we receive the same reward they will receive in the Lord. God needs both speakers and supporters, and both He will reward.

*We can courageously serve fellow believers (Matt. 10:42)*. This may be a reference to serving a fellow believer in jail. They would be dependent upon other believers to bring them food and water to survive. Yet, to serve them this food meant that you were sympatric to their cause and would implicate you in their crimes. In this case, even a small act of compassion was very dangerous. Yet, disciples stood with other believers in need.

**Question:** What are some modern examples of “receiving fellow believers” and “serving fellow believers” which takes courage?



***Learn to Lean***

*Disciples depend on Jesus’ help*

*Lesson #4 (Part 1)*

*The miracles of Jesus (Part 1)*

*(The days following the choosing and sending of the Twelve)*

Jacob was the greedy, self-centered son of the old patriarch Isaac. His name came to represent deception because he achieved his goals through manipulation. He grasped after every opportunity to elevate himself above others. He had the brains. He had the skills. Jacob was going to succeed no matter what it took.

In this way, Jacob reflects how most people live. He trusted in his own street smarts and talents to promote himself. Yet, Jacob found this to be a feeble and lonely way to live. No matter how smart he was, someone was always smarter (Gen. 29:15-30 – Laban!). No matter how strong he was, someone was always stronger (Gen. 27:41-42 – Esau!). Living by his own wisdom and power wasn’t working.

Years earlier God made him the promise, *“I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you”* (Gen. 28:15). Jacob heard those words, but lived most of his life like everything depended upon him. However, through a number of painful failures Jacob began to see the foolishness of trusting in his own power. He came to realize that true wisdom and power come only through trusting in the Lord.

|  |
| --- |
| The years of leaning were the best years of his life! |

One night God taught Jacob this lesson in a very personal way. God touched Jacob’s hip and it came out of socket. It is likely that Jacob lived the rest of his life with a limp. He depended upon a staff to lean upon. Yet, those years of leaning were the best years of his life. In fact, it was only when he learned to lean that Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:22-32). He came to realize when you stand on your own the smallest wind will blow you down, but when you lean on God you can withstand the strongest storm.

**Disciples Learn to Lean**

When Jesus chose the twelve apostles they were more like Jacob than like Israel. They used manipulation to elevate themselves above others (Mark 10:35-37). They trusted in their own cleverness and power (John 18:10). This would not do. The cause of the kingdom of heaven would certainly fail it if was left up to the feeble skills of men.

But God made the Twelve a promise. The promise sounded a lot like the promise God made to Jacob. He said, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:20). The success of the Twelve was not dependent upon their brilliance, but on God’s involvement. It was God’s wisdom they were given to speak (2 Cor. 4:7). It was God’s providential care which opened the doors of opportunity for the gospel (Col. 4:3). The apostles gladly recognized the weakness of their part in relation to the work of God; *“Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”* (1 Cor. 3:7). When they came back home from great evangelistic endeavors they didn’t speak of their accomplishments, but rather, *“they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith”* (Acts 14:27). In other words, the Twelve learned to lean on the Lord. That is why God could use them to change their world.

|  |
| --- |
| God works through those who learn to lean. |

God works through those who learn to lean. If we are going to be people through whom God can change our world, we must learn to depend upon Jesus rather than ourselves.

In practice this means we will ***lean on His word rather than our wits***. There is a great temptation for disciples to invent their own strategies to accomplish the work of God. After all, these are modern times. Yet, what are we saying, except that God was not wise enough to give us truths and tools which are good enough for our times? Nonsense. Disciples learn to lean only on the wisdom of God’s revealed word. Anything else robs God of His honor and shares it with fallible people.

In addition, when we “learn to lean” we will ***lean on His work to strengthen our work***. Timid Israel stood on the verge of conquering Canaan and said, “We can’t do it, the task is too great!” Yet, two faithful men admitted, “Yes, the task is too great, but we are not doing it alone. The Lord is with us. Do not be afraid.” (Num. 14:9). Israel still needed to battle and possess, but they were not doing it alone. In the same way, the early church was confident that God was working with them. He was opening doors, protecting, and directing them. When we obey God’s word we have the promise that we are not alone (Eph. 3:20).



The need to lean on the Lord is essential for effective discipleship. When you “learn to lean” it will do three important things for you.

***Leaning Will Make You Courageous*.** Does your faith ever drive you to take a risk? Probably not if you don’t believe God is with you. But, it’s amazing the things you will risk when you believe someone you love and trust is going with you. My best friend in school was Keith Berryhill. Keith was bigger than nearly everyone else in school. As a result, I didn’t worry going down any alley or facing any crowd when he was by my side. My friends, the Lord who said, “I am with you always,” is the same one who said, “The gates of Hades can’t even stop My church.” Knowing that, *“If God be with us, who can be against us,”* should give us tremendous courage.

***Leaning Will Take Away Your Pride*.** When you believe things are going great because you are something special, then pride and division set in. That’s why so many churches struggle with disharmony. They sit around comparing themselves with each other—seeing who is the most talented, jealous of who got more attention, who was selected, who was overlooked. But, when you believe your part is rather small compared to what God is doing it strips away the pride. A church that thinks little of God’s activity will be full of glory seekers, but a church that constantly depends on God’s help will be full of glory givers.

***Leaning Will Make You Pray.*** Leaners are prayers. Jesus said, *“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there” and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”* (Matt. 17:20). If your goal is to move a molehill, you won’t have much incentive to pray. You can do that with human effort. But mountainous goals of Scripture will motivate you to go to your knees and seek God’s help.

**How Jesus Created Leaners**

Jesus taught the Twelve to lean upon Him by employing two methods: what they *heard* and what they *saw*. In the same way as children learn to live by watching and listening to their parents, so the disciples learned to rely solely on the Lord by looking and listening.

After Jesus chose the Twelve **He set out on an intensive period of *teaching*.** Some of the gospel’s greatest sermons are recorded in this section. Jesus taught them the message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7; Luke 6). He followed that up a few days later with what is called “The Bread of Life” discourse (John 6). The words Jesus spoke to them will be reserved for our next study.

**Jesus also taught them to depend upon them by the *miracles* they observed.** We begin with these because they were immediately more profound to the infant faith of the disciples. “Actions speak more loudly than words,” we say. The miracles Jesus performed in the days immediately after selecting and sending the Twelve apostles shouted a powerful message: “You can trust Me!” Each miracle showed the Twelve they could not depend upon themselves to handle the challenges they faced. They needed the power that only Jesus possessed.

In this study, we’ve limited our examination to the miracles Jesus performed in the days immediately after the selection of the Twelve; and in the days immediately after they returned from their first preaching trip. These miracles were specifically designed to teach the new disciples to totally lean on the Lord and not on themselves. Paul later captured this truth in the powerful words from 2 Corinthians 3:5,

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God.” (2 Cor. 3:5)

Truly,

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” (2 Cor. 4:7)

May we open our eyes wide to see the power of Jesus at work in the miracles which follow, so that we might “learn to lean” more fully upon Him.

**Disciples Are Leaners**

We will look at five different groupings of miracles which emphasize the sufficiency of Jesus in areas in which we are often lacking. Seeing Jesus’ ability against our own weakness should create within us what these miracles created in the Twelve, a complete dependence upon Jesus.

**#1 Jesus Has Authority for My Weakness**

***Healing the Centurion’s Servant. Read Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10***

This is the first miracle the Twelve witnessed following their selection. After they were selected they might be tempted to think, “I’m something really special here. When do I get to start bossing people around?” But this miracle quickly shows them that only Jesus has the authority. Their role was simply to listen and respond. Amazingly, it was a Gentile that first taught the Twelve to lean on Jesus.

**Question:** What situation revealed the centurion’s weakness?

**Question:** How did the centurion view himself compared to Jesus? What makes that attitude so amazing?

**Question:** Since the centurion viewed Jesus as “Lord” what did he believe Jesus could do?

**Question:** How did Jesus feel about the centurion? What promise did Jesus make?

***Application: Does What You See, Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** What situations in our lives and in our service cause us to face our own weaknesses?

**Question:** What kind of things create pride in our lives? Why is a humble awareness of our true condition so essential to leaning on the Lord?

**Question:** Recognizing the rightful place of Jesus (“Lord”) causes us to trust in Him more. What other titles of Jesus help you lean upon Him and not yourself?

**Question:** When you run into difficult situations, which reveal your lack of wisdom and power, how can you lean on the authority of Jesus for your help? Think of practical ways.

**#2 Jesus Has Abundance for My Insufficiency**

***The Feeding of The Five Thousand. Read Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13***

When the Twelve came back from the limited commission they were excited and exhausted, so Jesus took them to a quiet place to rest (They also heard John the Baptist died, and the news surely shook them emotionally). Yet, *compassion* overwhelmed the need for *rest* that day. The crowds found Jesus. Jesus saw their great need for the truth of the kingdom. He saw them as “sheep without a shepherd.” So, He spent all day teaching them.

When the Twelve returned from the limited commission they felt pretty good about their work and abilities. They said, “Even the evil spirits are subject to us” (Luke 10:17). “We are pretty tough stuff,” in other words. Yet, that very day Jesus taught them how totally *insufficient* they were to meet the needs on their own. *They needed to learn to lean on Him.* When they brought the little they had, Jesus made them more than sufficient to meet the need.

**Question:** When the disciples saw the overwhelming need of the people’s hunger and their total inability to meet it, what was their suggestion?

**Question:** When Jesus told them, “You give them something,” what did it reveal?

**Question:** When they brought to Jesus the little they did have, what was Jesus able to do with it?

***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

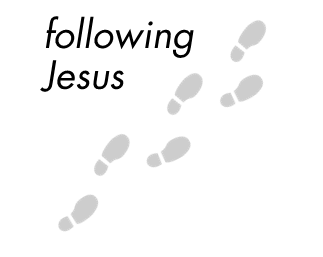
**Question:** The Twelve were tired from weeks of hard work, and they were grieving the loss of their friend John. They really could use a bit of time off. Yet, while rest is important what is more important than rest?

**Question:** What tasks did God give us that seem too big to accomplish?

When something seems impossible to accomplish we often think that gives us the right to not try. How does the command of Jesus, “Bring what you have,” apply to times like that?

**Question:** How does this miracle ignite our service to the Lord when we feel so insufficient for the task?

**Question:** Later the Twelve will be afraid because of a storm at sea. Jesus will walk on the water and still the storm, but He will be disappointed in the Twelve because their fear was an indication that they “had not understood about the loaves” (Mark 6:52). How does understanding the miracle of feeding the five thousand relieve our fears?



***Learn to Lean***

*Disciples depend on Jesus’ help*

*Lesson #4 (Part 2)*

*The miracles of Jesus (Part 2)*

*(In the days following the choosing and sending of the Twelve)*

It is said, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” If this is true, then the miracles of Jesus spoke volumes. The miracles of Jesus were sermons in action. They gave life to His teachings by revealing the divine nature of the One who spoke, and they literally brought His teachings to life. In this way, miracles were teaching tools. In the same way that parables provided literary illustrations of Jesus’ teaching, His miracles provided literal illustrations of His instruction. Miracles were not just moments to create wonder, but to create understanding.

***The miracles Jesus performed confirmed that God was with Him.*** Nicodemus acknowledged, *“We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”* (John 3:2). When God spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai His words were accompanied by miraculous smoke, thunder and earthquake. The miraculous signs signaled the presence of God, and it generated in the people a necessary fear to motivate their acceptance and obedience (Exodus 20:18-21). In the same way, Jesus’ miracles confirmed His message was from God. Jesus told His weak and doubtful disciples,

“The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. **11**Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” (John 14:10-11)

The miraculous works created an awareness that the words Jesus spoke were from God. This understand created the awe and reverence required to result in obedience.

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| Miracles were not just moments to create wonder, but to create understanding. |

***The miracles of Jesus are also windows into His divine nature.*** Jesus’ miracles give us insight not only into His words, but into His nature. For example, if you see a man go across the street to help a neighbor unload a heavy box you might conclude, “He is a kind man.” “Actions speak louder than words” we say, because they reveal our true character and beliefs. In the same way, the miracles of Jesus reveal His true nature. For example, the miracles of Jesus reveal His power over creation (John 1:1-11, because He is the Creator); His power over space (John 4:46-54); His power over time (John 5:1-9); His mastery over all needs (John 6:-14); His adequacy in times of trouble (John 6:16-21); His superiority over Satan and evil (Matt. 8:16; Luke 11:14-23); and His power over death (Luke 11:39-44). If we want a window through which to see the *divine abilities* of Jesus we need only to see His miracles. In addition, His miracles also reveal His *divine attitude* toward people. Matthew records, *“When Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick”* (Matt. 14:14; also Mark 1:41). The miracles of Jesus show us a powerful divine being who uses His power out of compassion for the good of His creation.

Two further reasons for Jesus’ miracles will be explored in the next lesson, but these two reasons alone show us that Jesus is trustworthy. This is the lesson the early disciples learned, and it is what formed them into men who could change their world.

**Lean on Jesus**

In our last lesson we introduced how Jesus taught the Twelve to lean upon Him by employing two methods: what they *heard* and what they *saw*. The importance of *teaching* and *miracles* in the training of the Twelve can be seen in the way Matthew puts together his gospel. Just before Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount he records this editorial note:

“Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matt. 4:23).

Notice the two tools of Jesus’ ministry: preaching and healing. This note is followed by the Sermon on the Mount—the most extensive example of Jesus’ *teaching* in the gospels (Matt. 5-7). That is followed by the record of ten different *miracles* (Matt. 8-9). The section ends with almost the same statement with which it began,

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| The teaching gave them something to believe; the miracles gave them a reason to believe it! |

“Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt. 9:35).

According to Luke, Jesus chose the Twelve before giving the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:12-16). Therefore, the first thing Jesus did with His newly chosen apostles was to *teach* them and *perform miracles* in their presence. The teaching gave them something to believe; the miracles gave them a *reason* to believe it!

In this lesson, we will continue our look into the miracles Jesus performed immediately after choosing the Twelve where they learned that they could lean on Jesus. He was more than able to handle whatever they faced.

May we open our eyes wide to see the power of Jesus at work in the miracles which follow, so that we might learn to lean more fully upon Him.

***The Signs of Jesus in the Gospel of John***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Reference*** | ***Sign*** | ***Sphere*** | ***Belief*** | ***Unbelief*** |
| 2:1-11 | Turning Water to Wine | Creation  (Quality) | Disciples believed  2:11 |  |
| 4:46-54 | Healing of the Nobleman’s Son | Space  (Disease) | Man and household believed  4:53 |  |
| 5:1-18 | Healing of the Man at the Pool | Time | Belief implied by action  5:9 | Jews sought to kill Jesus  5:18 |
| 6:1-14 | Feeding of the Five Thousand | Quantity  (Physical needs) | Acknowledgment of Jesus as prophet  6:14 | Many left Him  6:66 |
| 6:16-21 | Walking on the Water | Nature | Disciples believed  6:21 |  |
| 9:1-41 | Restoring Sight to the Blind | Light  (Misfortune) | Progressive belief  9:11, 17, 33, 38 | Reaction of the Pharisees  9:16, 24, 29, 40, 41 |
| 11:1-44 | The Raising of Lazarus | Death | Martha — 11:27  Jews — 11:45  12:11 | Plot to put Jesus to death  11:53 |

**Three Descriptions of Miracles**

“*Signs”* – These outward expressions of divine power that points to a spiritual truth.

*“Wonders”* – A marvel, something that makes its appeal to the senses, and causes a person to be in awe, or wonder.

*“Miracles”* – From (dynamis) means a mighty work. Word from which we get the word dynamite (explosive, powerful). Points to the divine energy exerted in its act.

***Characteristics of Jesus’ Miracles***

*Truly historical* - The miracles of Jesus are recorded in an objective historical point of view. There is no sensationalism or fantasizing of the miracles of Jesus that is common among mythical writings.

*Met pressing human needs* - The miracles of Jesus were not preformed frivolously nor upon command (Luke 23:6-12, Matthew 12:38), but they meet pressing human needs (as Jesus meet pressing spiritual needs).

*Demonstrated Jesus’ power over every sphere*. The Creator showed His power over nature, over human infirmities, over evil spirits, and over death. In the miracles of Jesus, we see he has power over everything known to man.

*Performed Openly / Completed Instantly* - The Miracles of Jesus were done openly (John 18:20), and even His adversaries recognized them as notable miracles (John 11:47). Jesus’ miracles were also clearly performed instantly (Mark 3:5).

*Jesus’ miracles were free from retaliation*. - Jesus never used His miracles to physically harm those who brutally opposed Him.

**Disciples Are Leaners** (continued)

In our previous lesson, we looked at two groupings of miracles which emphasize the sufficiency of Jesus. In this lesson we will consider another group of miracles Jesus performed after calling the Twelve. Seeing Jesus’ ability against our own weakness should create within us a complete dependence upon Jesus.

**#3 Jesus Has the Calm for My Troubles**

Few things are more uncontrollable than water. When it is out of control it is deadly. Just ask the people in the days of Noah. For this reason, raging water is used throughout Scripture as an illustration of powers and sins that threaten to overwhelm God’s people (Isa. 57:20). Jesus uses two “water miracles” to show His disciples that He can bring calm (peace) to those things that trouble them.

***Jesus Stilling the Storm. Read Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25***

This miracle takes place after Jesus spends the day teaching the people in parables. Now, His disciples need a further illustration of truth, this comes in the form of a storm.

**Question:** Whose idea was it to get in a boat and cross the sea?

**Question:** Why do you believe Jesus is sleeping in the middle of the storm?

**Question:** What did the disciples interpret Jesus’ sleeping to mean?

**Question:** What does Jesus’ ability to calm the storm teach us about His nature (Who he is)? (see Mark 4:41)

**Question:** Jesus rebukes the disciples for two things, what are they?

**Question:** The disciples responded to Jesus’ miracle with fear. Is this fear right? What is the difference between the fear they had of the storm, and the fear they had because of the miracle?

***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** The storm gave the disciples a distorted view of Jesus as one who does not care about their troubles. They were wrong. When troubles come into our lives what can we do to maintain a clear understanding of the character of God?

**Question:** Jesus brought peace to the storm with the command of His word. What implications does this have for finding peace in our storms? (see Phil. 4:6-8)

**Question:** When storms hit we need less “fear” and more “faith” (see Mark 4:40). What can we do to decrease fear? What can we do to increase faith?

**#3 Jesus Has the Calm for My Troubles** (continued)

***Jesus Walking on The Water. Read Matthew 14:24-33; Mark 6:47-52; John 6:16-21***

There are two things that should have prepared the Twelve for the storm on the sea. *First*, they went through a storm with Jesus before. In the first storm experience, the disciples had Jesus in the boat with them; but this time He was on a mountain praying for them. This time they would learn to live by faith.

*Second*, the storm is preceded by God’s abundant supply. In each of the gospels this account is preceded by the miracle of feeding the five thousand. The connection between the two miracles is important because at the end of the section the gospel writer says, *“They had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened”* (Mark 6:52). There was a lesson the Twelve needed to learn on the water that they missed on the land. Let’s consider what that lesson might be.

**Question:** Jesus commanded them get into the boat. They obeyed. Yet, they encountered a terrifying circumstance. Does obeying Jesus mean things will always go easily? Why?

**Question:** Did Jesus know the Twelve were struggling in the storm? (see Mark 6:48)

**Question:** When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water were they comforted? (Matt. 14:26)

**Question:** Why do you think Jesus invited Peter to come to Him on the water?

**Question:** What caused Peter to begin to sink? (see Matt. 14:30)

**Question:** What important decision did Peter make as he began to sink? (see Matt. 14:30)

**Question:** Jesus responds to Peter’s request in what two ways?

**Question:** How did the Twelve respond to the miraculous ceasing of the storm and Jesus’ walking on the water? (Matt. 14:33)

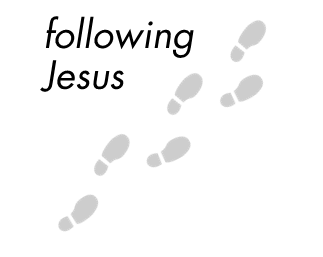
***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** The Twelve faced this trouble because they obeyed Jesus. Later Jesus commanded these same men to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.” What did the disciples experience as the result of obeying Jesus’ command to share the gospel with the world? How did this experience prepare them for what they faced? For what we face?

**Question:** When our faith begins to falter in the storms of life how can we keep our eyes on Jesus and not be distracted by fearful circumstances?

**Question:** How is our worship increased by facing fearful circumstances with Jesus?



***Learn to Lean***

*Disciples depend on Jesus’ help*

*Lesson #4 (Part 3)*

*The miracles of Jesus (Part 3)*

*(In the days following the choosing and sending of the Twelve)*

In the introduction to our previous study, we considered how the miracles of Jesus confirm that God was with Him, and they provide us with a window to see Jesus’ divine nature. At the beginning of this lesson we will consider two truths we learn about Jesus through His miracles.

***The miracles prove Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God as prophesied.*** Contrary to popular opinion miracles are not prevalent throughout history. Most of the miracles in the Bible are clustered around three periods of time (Creation of Israel; the prophets Elijah and Elisha (Israel in crisis); and creation of the church). Therefore, when Jesus came working miracles it was an unusual thing. The prophets revealed that when the Christ came He would be accompanied by many miracles. The miracles of Jesus then pointed to His divine nature and His role as the Christ who would save people from their sins. (Prophecy Isa. 35:4-6 // Fulfilled Matt. 11:5; Prophecy Isa. 53:4 // Fulfilled Matt. 8:16-17; Prophecy Isa. 61:1-2 // Fulfilled Luke 4:18-19 (Matt. 11:5))

***The miracles of Jesus generated a response from people.*** No one ever denied the reality of Jesus’ miracles. Even His enemies admitted the supernatural nature of His works. But while everyone agreed Jesus did miracles, there were very different responses to them.

The miracles made some *angry* and they wanted to put Jesus to death (Matt. 12:9-14; John 11:47-48, 53).

Others were drawn to Jesus in only a *superficial* way by the miracles (John 6:26-27; to these Jesus refused to do more miracles, but rather gave them challenging teaching).

In others, the miraculous works of Jesus created within them *genuine faith* (Mark 16:9).

We tend to believe if we could just see miracles our faith would be stronger. This is not the case (see Luke 16:19-31). However, the miracles of Jesus do make an impact. What that impact will be is up to the quality of our hearts.

The miracles of Jesus reveal He is worthy of our trust and obedience. These miracles taught the Twelve they could lean on Jesus, and that confidence formed them into men who could change their world.

**Lean on Jesus When the Enemy Attacks**

The United States has been involved in military conflict, 93% of its history (222 years of military conflict out of 239 years). The conflict was on foreign soil for the majority of these years. As a result, many of us cannot imagine what it is like to be in a hostile land, surrounded by danger.

Yet, as citizens of heaven we live in enemy territory. Jesus called the devil, *“the ruler of this world”* (John 12:31), and the apostle Paul called him, *“the god of this world who has blinded the minds of those who do not believe”* (2 Cor. 4:4). 1 John 5:19 clearly says, *“the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”* Peter reminds us that *“your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8).

What the Bible says is clearly supported by our own experience. There is not a day when *the world* is not further corrupted by immorality, deceit, violence, theft and murder. There is not a day *that we* are not pained and tempted by the ever presence of wickedness. We are engaged in combat with an enemy that is intent on destroying us, not just 93% of the time, but all the time. *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Eph. 6:12).

Into this battlefield enters Jesus. His mission is singular. John put his mission this way in 1 John 3:8, *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* The purpose of Jesus entering this world was to destroy the works of the devil. The miracles He performed proved He is more than able to protect us when the enemy attacks.

Of course, the greatest enemy we will face is death (1 Cor. 15:26). Death is a ruthless enemy, which no one can defeat. That is, until Jesus showed up. Jesus proved through His ability to raise the dead, and to conquer death Himself, to be worthy of our trust. The One who can overcome death, is worthy of our life.

Jesus’ miracles prove that we can lean on Him when the enemies attack.

***Continuation of Miracles Today***

The Bible teaches that God continues to work in our world today. He works powerfully through is word (Heb. 4:12), the prayers of the saints (1 John 5:14), and through His providential guidance (1 Tim. 2:2). However, the Bible indicates that the miracles that accompanied Jesus and His apostles would not continue. Here are a couple of reasons.

**The Purpose of Miracles Has Ceased.** Miracles were to prove Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31). The ones recorded fulfill that purpose. Miracles also confirmed the message was from God (Mark 16:15-20; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). The apostles were guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit to confirmed their message through miracles (John 16:13). Therefore, Paul told the Corinthians that miraculous gifts would cease (1 Cor. 13:8-13)) when we have “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:17).

**The Process for Passing on Miracles Has Ceased.** The apostles played an essential part in passing on the ability to do miracles to others (Acts 8:12-18; 19:5-6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6). When the apostles passed away, so did the need for miracles to confirm the gospel, and means of passing on the miracles also passed with them.

Practically, we do not see the kind of miracles that were done in the New Testament today. For example, in the New Testament…

*Miracles Are Remarkable.* On one occasion Jesus healed a man with a withered hand. Bones and flesh, muscle and tendons were created that were not there before. In an instant, the man’s hand was just as whole and perfect as the other (Matt. 12:19-13). Jesus and His disciples, walked on water, they raised the dead, not once but many times. Many of the miracles people claim to do today simply do not raise to the level of the remarkable nature of New Testament miracles.

*Miracles Are Undeniable.* When Jesus or his disciples worked miracles, there was no doubt about it. On many occasions, it says that even the enemies of the Lord could not deny that a miracle had been done (Matt. 12:24; John 12:47). Many of the things that are called miracles today are not so undeniable, and irrefutable.

*Miracles Are Immediate & Complete*. And the miracles of the Bible were not slow, progressive processes, but they produced instantaneous and complete effects. Jesus and His apostles did not have to labor over somebody for hours, they simply said the word and it was done! But, much of what is called miraculous today takes many hours even days to have any effect, and then the effects are only partial.

**Disciples Are Leaners** (continued)

In our previous lessons, we looked at three groupings of miracles which emphasize the sufficiency of Jesus. In this lesson, we will consider two more groupings of miracles Jesus performed just after calling the Twelve. Seeing Jesus’ ability against our own weakness should create within us a complete dependence upon Jesus.

**#4 Jesus Has Power Over My Enemy**

***Casting Out Demons. Read [Matthew 12:22-27; Mark 3:20-30] & [Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39]***

There are a whole group of miracles in the gospels which show that Jesus is superior to Satan. First of all the demons often recognize Jesus and declare His identity as the Son of God, His superior power, and His inevitable victory. Not only that, but Jesus showed His authority over the demons by casting them out with just a word.

These miracles provide wonderful comfort to people like us who pray, “Deliver us from the evil one.” He can. He has proven it.

***[Questions Concerning Matthew 12:22-27; Mark 3:20-30]***

**Question:** Since Jesus’ enemies could not deny His ability to cast out demons, how did they say He was able to do it?

**Question:** How did Jesus show their reasoning was flawed?

**Question:** Jesus said his ability to cast out demons signaled the presence of what two things? (see Matt. 12:28 & Mark 3:26)

***[Questions Concerning Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39]***

**Question:** What things had the demon done to the man from Gadarenes?

**Question:** What did the man (demon in the man) do when he saw Jesus? (see Mark 5:6)

**Question:** What things did the demon recognize about Jesus? (see Mark 5:7)

**Question:** How did the man appear after Jesus cast the demon out of him? (see Mark 5:15)

**Question:** What did Jesus tell the man who had demon possessed to do? (see Mark 5:19-20)

***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** How should the fact that Satan is a defeated enemy give us courage with regard to sin and death?

**Question:** The demon did terrible things to the man from Gadarenes. Describe how sin still does terrible things in the world today.

**Question:** How should we look if we have been set free from Satan’s power? (see Mark 5:15)

**Question:** What should those of us who have been set free from sin and Satan’s power respond to the wonderful power and grace of Jesus? (See Mark 5:19-20)

**#5 Jesus Has Life for My Death**

The final group of miracles the Twelve witness soon after their selection demonstrated Jesus’ power over death. Other amazing things may be simulated by men, but no one has the power of life and death but God. We will consider the evidence for Jesus’ power over life and death under three sections 1) How Jesus raised the dead 2) The transfiguration 3) The sign of Jonah – His resurrection.

***Jesus Raised The Dead. Read [The Widow’s Son: Luke 7:11-17] [Jairus’ Daughter: Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56]***

Jesus displayed His authority over death by raising the dead. In Revelation 1 Jesus said, *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death”* (Rev. 1:18). In the gospel accounts Jesus raised three people from the dead; the widow’s son, Jairus’ daughter, and Lazarus. We will study the first two miracles since they occurred soon after the Twelve were called.

***[Questions Concerning the Widow’s Son: Luke 7:11-17]***

**Question:** How did Jesus feel about the widow who was weeping over her dead son?

**Question:** What did Jesus do to raise the boy from death?

**Question:** What did Jesus do with the boy after he brought him back to life?

**Question:** How did the people respond to what Jesus did?

***[Questions Concerning Jairus’ Daughter: Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56]***

**Question:** What is surprising about Jairus, this ruler of the synagogue, falling down at the feet of Jesus and begging? Why would he do this?

**Question:** What did Jairus believe Jesus had to do to heal his daughter?

**Question:** What did Jairus learn by waiting for Jesus to heal the woman with the issue of blood?

**Question:** What two pieces of advice did Jairus receive when he learned his daughter was dead? One from a friend, one from Jesus…

**Question:** How did people at Jairus’ home respond to Jesus statement that the little girl was not dead, but sleeping?

**Question:** How did Jesus raise the little girl from death?

**Question:** Why do you believe Jesus would not allow the crowds to follow Him, or allow the people in the home to enter the room where He performed the miracle?

***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** In both stories (and the story of Lazarus’ raising as well) it was the voice of Jesus that brought life to the dead. What does that tell us about the gospel’s power to give life? What does that tell us about our resurrection?

**Question:** When faith is present, death can look like sleep (1 Thess. 4:13-18). How does this give you comfort about believers who have already died?

***The Transfiguration. Read Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36a***

The miraculous transfiguration of Jesus takes place quick on the heels of one of Jesus’ most challenging statements. He has just told the Twelve that to follow Him they must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34-38). He is calling them to die. But in the transfiguration they discover the wonderful truth that Jesus is the source of all life. Therefore, the call to die to self becomes much easier to follow.

The transfiguration describes a time when Jesus stripped away His humanity and for a brief moment His disciples saw a portion of the glory He had from before the world began—His divine nature (John 17:5).

**Question:** What did Jesus speak to Moses and Elijah concerning? (see Luke 9:31)

**Question:** What did Peter want to do after seeing the glory of Jesus revealed?

**Question:** What did God tell the disciples they should know about Jesus and do as a result?

***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** Somehow the disciples knew Jesus was speaking to Moses and Elijah. What joy would it give them to know those men were still alive although they were dead? What confidence does it give you concerning your death?

**Question:** What confidence does it give you to live for Jesus knowing that He is the eternal God who has power of life and death?

**Question:** How does seeing the eternal, glorified God cause us to want to “Hear Him!” only?

***The Sign Of Jonah. Read Matthew 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-12***

This lesson about miracles ends with a story where Jesus refuses to do a miracle. A group of Pharisees and Sadducees approach Jesus asking for a sign. Oh, they had plenty of signs. Jesus worked many miracles before this very group. They were wanting Jesus to perform on their whim.

Jesus sees the selfishness of their hearts and says, “I will give you no sign now, but you will one day see the sign of Jonah.” With this Jesus predicted His most powerful display of life over death—this own resurrection. It is His resurrection that is the basis of our own freedom from the death of sin (Rom. 4:25; 6:3-5; Col. 2:12) and resurrection from physical death (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

**Question:** In what way were the Pharisees and Sadducees able to see the future?

**Question:** Why would Jesus not do any sign for them?

**Question:** What is the sign of Jonah?

***Application: Does What You See Make You Lean?***

Put yourself in the shoes of the Twelve. Witness the miracle with them. How does seeing Jesus cause you to trust Him more and yourself less?

**Question:** Why is it hypocritical and foolish for us not to trust in Jesus’ power over death today?

**Question:** When Jonah was released from the belly of the fish after three days what did he go do? How does this relate to the great commission?

***A Song To Sing…***

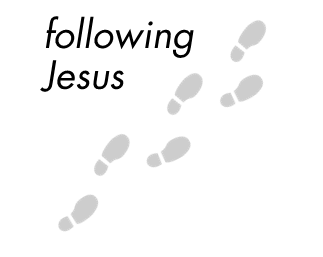
**Leaning on The Everlasting Arms**Words by Eli­sha A. Hoff­man

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
O how bright the path grows from day to day,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms;  
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Chorus  
Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus  
Safe and secure from all alarms;  
Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.



***Ears to Hear***

*Disciples think differently about* ***Jesus***

*Lesson #5 (Part 1)*

*The teachings of Jesus (Part 1)*

*(What Jesus taught the Twelve in Galilee and Judea following their selection.)*

Information is the fuel of motivation and the map to effective production. The wrong information will dampen your enthusiasm and derail your progress. On the other hand true and helpful information will thrill your heart and advance your cause. Or another way of looking at is: Our thoughts act like the chisel in the hand of the sculptor, they form who we are. What we choose to think about determines the direction of our lives (James 3:3-4). When you think of how fundamental information and thinking is to life there is little wonder why Jesus came as a teacher.

In our last few lessons we saw how Jesus transformed the Twelve by the things that entered their *eyes*. Namely, the amazing miracles of Jesus. His character and values were preached through the power of His divine action.

In the lessons that follow we will consider how Jesus formed the Twelve through what entered their *ears*! Namely, the amazing teachings of Jesus. In these lessons, we will listen to the things Jesus said when He turned directly Twelve, looked them in the eye, and formed their thoughts by the words of His mouth.

In this first lesson we will consider the lessons Jesus taught the Twelve in the months that followed their selection in the region of Galilee and Judea. During these months Jesus helped them understand who He was more accurately. As we sit with Jesus in these private meetings with the Twelve we will also come to see more clearly the Jesus of Scripture.

**Jesus Was a Teacher!**

Jesus’ miracles astonished the crowds, but Jesus came to be a teacher. Ultimately, Jesus was not known to people as a son, carpenter, or even miracle worker. He was known to them as “Teacher.” In fact, “Teacher” is the title with which Jesus was most commonly addressed. Over 50 times, by friends and foes alike, he was called the “teacher.” It may be translated by the word “Rabbi,” or “Master,” but the idea is that Jesus is a teacher. In fact, Jesus saw Himself as a teacher, and teaching as the very purpose of His earthly ministry. In Mark 1 He told His disciples, *“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth”* (Mark 1:38). Jesus, the “Word become flesh” was a teacher (John 1:14).

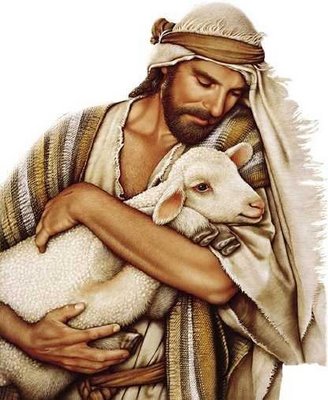
And what a teacher He was! The multitudes traveled great distances just for the chance to hear Him. When He was finished speaking the crowds were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom?” (Matt. 7:28; 13:54; 22:33). In John 7 the Jewish leaders send the temple guards to arrest Jesus. When the military men arrived Jesus was teaching, so they started listening. After hearing Jesus teach they turned around and went back to the Jewish leaders empty handed. The irate leaders asked, *“Why have you not brought Him?” The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!””* (John 7:45-46). Even his foes admitted He was a master teacher. Jesus gave great dignity and value to the work of teaching God’s truths.

***Teaching Truth Destroys Satan’s Work.*** It should not surprise us that Jesus came to teach, because Jesus came to destroy the work of Satan. Satan does his work through spreading lies. The Scripture calls him, *“the deceiver,”* the *“liar from the beginning”* (Rev. 12:9; John 8:44). Jesus words expose the lies of Satan, which allows His disciples to live free. *“He said to the Jews who believed him he said, “If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31). Jesus came as a teacher of truth, because Satan does his work in teaching lies. Every time the truth is taught Satan is challenged to take a step backward in his attempts to capture our hearts.

**What Made Jesus a Good Teacher?**

What made Jesus a good teacher? In a word: Character! Jesus, better than any other, illustrates the fundamental truth that good teaching radiates from inner character. A good teacher is made from the inside out. It begins with an integrity of heart and mind.

***Jesus Had an Inner Commitment to Truth.*** Even His enemies could clearly see the integrity with which He taught. On one occasion they said*, “Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God truly”* (Luke 20:21). Jesus didn’t teach to please the crowds (John 5:41). In fact, sometimes He said things that were so challenging it dispersed the crowds. It didn’t matter if Jesus was with the powerful or the outcast, with the rich or the poor, the Jews or the Samaritan, Jesus’ inner commitment to truth drove Him to speak what was needed.

***Jesus Had an Inner Compulsion of Compassion.*** He didn’t go around firing off truth from a machinegun. He taught people because He loved them. *“When Jesus came out he saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things”* (Mark 6:34). His teaching was compelled by His compassion for people.

One day a rich, young ruler came to Jesus. Twice he called Jesus, “Good Teacher,” and asked Him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus gave him some very challenging instruction, but don’t forget where that instruction came from. Mark 10:21 says, *“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.””* Jesus didn’t teach out of a desire for fame, power or wealth. His teaching radiated from a character that was committed to truth and compelled by compassion.

Jesus was utterly perfect. There was not a speck of sin or selfishness in Him—not an ounce of pride or covetousness—inwardly there was never Someone with such character! No wonder He is such a great teacher. No wonder His words have the power to change people. No wonder His message is so full of truth and love. Because good teaching radiates from inner character. And no teacher can match the character of Christ.

***Jesus Spoke The Words Of God.*** Ultimately, Jesus’ teachings were great because they were the words of the God. They were rooted in His own divine nature, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life,”* He said (John 14:6). Jesus is *“the Word”* who *“became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). The truth He taught did not have an earthly source. It was not gained through study and experience. It is simply the truth upon which Creation is founded. *“He who sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him…as My Father taught Me, I speak these things”* (John 8:26). The content of Jesus’ teaching came from outside of this world and is not bound by the limitations of this world.

Is there any wonder how Jesus could transform the Twelve apostles into men who could change the world? They literally had the best teacher in the world, giving them eternal truth, to see through the lies of Satan—because He deeply loved them! A teacher like that will change a person.

Now, we have a teacher like that. We can sit where the Twelve sat, and if we open our ears we will hear what the Twelve heard. With each truth we hear our Lord will chisel our hearts and minds to into His image. May it be!

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**Change Your Thinking About Jesus**

The first thing Jesus taught the new disciples is who He was. He told them about His nature, character and His values. Jesus didn’t just teach truth, He personified it. To know Him gave His words credibility and clarification.

**Jesus Is Satisfying, But Not Everyone Will Receive Him**

Have you ever tried to share your favorite song, or favorite restaurant with a friend and have them say, “Ah, that’s not for me”? Frustrating isn’t it. You think it is so great and can’t wait to share it, but others think it is worthless. Jesus taught His disciples this would happen regarding Him. The Twelve would find Him satisfying, but others would reject Him. Consider how Jesus prepares them for this inevitability.

***The Bread of Life Teaching. Read John 6:1-71***

In this text Jesus begins by teaching over 5,000 men, women and children all day long. At the end of the day He miraculously feeds them with five loaves and two fish. The crowd was so amazed they tried to take Jesus by force and make Him king. Yet, He slipped away and made it to the other side of the sea.

By the next morning, the crowds found Him again. Yet, Jesus perceived they followed Him more for the miracles He performed and the food He gave, than for the truth He taught. So, Jesus began to teach them some challenging truth. At the end of the lesson people were not streaming down the aisle to repent; they were walking away shaking their heads and saying, “What a silly lesson.” The text says, *“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more”* (John 6:66).

At this point, Jesus has an important question for the Twelve:

“Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” 71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” (John 6:67-71)

With this text in mind consider the following questions:

**Question:** What did the Twelve learn about following Jesus when they watched the multitude leave Him after hearing some challenging truth?

**Question:** What did the Twelve learn about Jesus by the way He dealt with the crowd who followed Him for the wrong reasons?

**Question:** What reason(s) did Peter give for staying with Jesus? How do those reasons make you want to stay with Jesus?

**Question:** Jesus revealed that one of the Twelve as a devil. How do you think this understanding affected the disciples?

**Jesus Is King, But Not Everyone Will Obey Him**

***The Parables By The Sea. Read Matthew 13:1-58***

Matthew 13 contains several parables Jesus taught a crowd by the Sea of Galilee. Yet, at times Jesus turned to talk only to His disciples (Matt. 13:10). Then later *“Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house”* and talked privately with His disciples. On this occasion, Jesus taught mainly through parables. Yet, it is interesting that the parables (and explanations) Jesus shared with His disciples revealed how not everyone would accept Him. The word of the kingdom would go out to many, yet most would reject it. Again the Twelve are left asking, “Will I stay with Jesus when others reject Him?” Consider how the following parables, and their explanations, reveal how not everyone will accept Jesus.

**The Parable Of The Sower (Matt. 13:1-23):** In the middle of telling this parable Jesus stops to tell the disciples that not everyone wants to listen to the truth, and that is the very thing the parable illustrates!

How would knowing that not all hearers would remain faithful help the Twelve disciples?

**The Parable Of The Tares (Matt. 13:36-43):** In verse 36 Jesus sends the crowds home and speaks only to His close disciples. The first thing He does is give them an explanation of the parable of the tares.

What does the Parable of the Tares tell the Twelve about the Lord and their world? How does this help them remain faithful to Jesus?

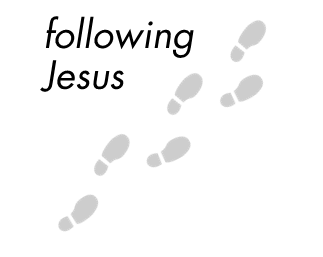
**The Parable Of The Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-51):** Jesus closes His teaching that day with another parable which shows the separation which will occur. However this separation happens between those who “appear” to be in the kingdom.

How does the parable of the dragnet help he disciples remain faithful to Jesus?

**Rejection At Nazareth (Matt. 13:53-58):** After Jesus teaches many parables about how many would reject Him, He demonstrates how these things were true even in His own home town.

Why did the people of Nazareth reject Jesus? Did it have to do with what He taught?

**Application:** One of the first things Jesus taught the Twelve was, “Not everyone will accept Me.” Why was this lesson so important for them to learn? Why is it important for us to learn?



***Ears to Hear***

*Disciples think differently about* ***the Kingdom***

*Lesson #5 (Part 2)*

*The teachings of Jesus (Part 2)*

*(What Jesus taught the Twelve in Galilee and Judea following their selection.)*

A discussion of politics introduces controversy into any gathering. Everyone has their opinion about how the government should be run, because so much is obviously lacking. While human governments are ordained by God (Rom. 13:1-7), their weaknesses point out our need for a greater Leader and more lasting nation fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

The word “kingdom” appears 157 times in the New

Testament. One reason it is so frequent is because Israel

was looking for the kingdom God promised David,

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13**He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Sam. 7:12-13)

They keenly anticipated the coming of this kingdom! Then Jesus came along, *“preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!””* (Mark 1:15). The people took notice. After His death and resurrection, *“Jesus appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”* (Acts 1:3). From beginning to end Jesus believed it was essential that His disciples know about the kingdom of God. If we say we follow Him, we cannot be fuzzy about what it means to be in His kingdom.

The phrase, “Kingdom of God” is used in different ways in the Bible. The idea behind each of these uses is the idea of “God’s rule.”

Most generally, God’s kingdom extends to ***all Creation***. The *“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”* (Psalm 24:1). There will coming a time when all creation will recognize the kingship of Jesus, and *“every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:11).

In the Old Testament ***Israel*** was to be the physical expression of God’s rule over a people—God’s kingdom (1 Chron. 28:5). Yet, from the beginning Israel often rejected God’s rule (1 Sam. 8:7, “they have rejected Me from being king over them.”). This rejection became complete among most of Israel when they refused Jesus as the Christ. Therefore, God promised, *“the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.”* (Matt. 21:43).

The kingdom of God is not limited to a certain family or geographical boundary, but to a people who express the character of God. *“He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves”* (Col. 1:13). The ***church*** is to be the earthly expression of God’s heavenly rule.

Ultimately, the kingdom refers to ***the eternal possession of the faithful***. Paul taught new believers, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts. 14:22). Paul’s final hope was to enter that kingdom, *“Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom”* (2 Tim. 4:18). We can all face death with the same joyful expectation, *“there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 1:11).

One of the biggest mistakes Israel made was to limit God’s kingdom to a physical nation. They expected the promised King would come to establish an earthly kingdom. However, in one of Jesus’ first sermons He completely redefined God’s kingdom. It was not defined by race or region. God’s kingdom was identified by God’s rule over people’s hearts. Jesus came to launch God’s kingdom over the hearts of all men and women. This is the topic of the famed, “Sermon on the Mount,” recorded in Matthew 5 – 7.

**The Sermon on the Mount**

“The kingdom” was the subject of Jesus’s message from the beginning. He taught, *“The kingdom is coming! Prepare. Get your heart right”* (Matt. 4:17). Then Jesus did the kind of preaching that prepared people for that kingdom, *“Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom”* (Matt. 4:23). Matthew promptly records the essence of this preaching in a sweeping sermon we call “The Sermon on the Mount.”

***It’s an Inaugural Address.*** The whole scene has the air of an inaugural address. In this country, a new President stands up in front of the nation to outline a vision for the country. Similarly, Jesus stood before the crowds to declare God’s criteria for His kingdom. *“Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan”* (Matt. 4:25). From the North, South, East, and West people poured in to listen to Jesus. He climbed to the top of a mountain, where He began to outline His vision for the kingdom of God He came to create.

***It’s Shadowed in Sinai.*** Shades of Mt. Sinai are seen in the text. In the same way that God spoke from the mountain the Law that would govern a kingdom on earth. Jesus now speaks from a mountain the core of what would govern the kingdom of heaven. The same reverence and awe that filled the minds of those who listened to God at Sinai now fills the hearts of those who heard Jesus, for at the end of the sermon it says, *“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority”* (Matthew 7:28-29).

***It’s Bracketed by Kingdom Statements.*** The first Beatitude and the last Beatitude shared a common promise, *“Theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:3,10). This is a literary devise that indicates everything in between deals with that subject. These kingdom statements find their echo at the end of the sermon when the people recognize the *“authority”* of the One who spoke them (Matt. 7:29). The Sermon on the Mount is a description of God’s kingdom given by God’s King.

People under the rule of God are not identified by the color of their skin, their ancestors, or place they live. Neither are they simply found by the religious names they wear or buildings they fill. The people in God’s kingdom have a certain kind of heart! This was always God’s intention, and it is once again clarified in the Sermon on the Mount.

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***An Expansion of The Two Great Commandments.*** The Sermon on the Mount is an expansion of the two great commandments… *“love God, love neighbor.”* These two commands are also expanded in the 10 commandments, with the first four expanding on what it means to *love God*, and the last six what it means to *love neighbor*. Similarly, in this Kingdom sermon Jesus expands on ….

Love Neighbor – Matt. 5:21-48

Love God – Matt. 6:1-34

Love Neighbor – Matt. 7:1-12

One lesson to learn is that God is consistent…we must love Him first and most, and we must treat others rightly.

**God’s Kingdom is Different from The World**

John Stott made this observation about the Sermon on the Mount, “The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed” (Stott. SOM. pg. 14). Let’s seek to change that. Jesus introduced the Kingdom by saying, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt. 4:17). The Sermon on the Mount is for those who repent—who change, who are different from their past and their culture. Matthew 6:8 could be the key phrase in the Sermon, it says, *“Do not be like them!”* Distinctiveness. Read through the Sermon on the Mount and ask yourself, “How am I to be different?” Then ask, “Am I willing to be different?” Answer those questions rightly and you will be a kingdom person.

***The Sermon on the Mount. Read Matthew 5 – 7***

**The Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-16):** Jesus outlines eight characteristics that are necessary to be a part of the kingdom of heaven. How do these characteristics differ from how a person becomes a part of an earthly nation?

The Old Testament begins with God pronouncing a *curse* because of Adam and Eve’s sin (Gen. 3:14-19). The New Testament begins with Jesus pronouncing the *blessing* because the coming of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3-12). What is the message in this contrast?

**Exceeding Righteousness (Matt. 5:17-48):** Jesus tells His disciples *“Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5:20). Then Jesus goes on to illustrate what “exceeding righteousness” looks like with six examples.

What characteristics do these six examples of “righteousness” have in *common*?

These six illustrations all deal with *relationships*. How do these examples of “righteousness” help create and maintain relationships in the kingdom of heaven?

**Kingdom Worship (Matt. 6:1-34):** The kingdom Jesus calls us to join is the kingdom of God. He is the king. Our attitude toward the king will be seen in how and what we worship.

How is kingdom worship different from the inadequate worship of religious Jews and Gentiles? (Look for similarities between the way kingdom people are to give, pray and fast.)

Idolatry was always a huge problem for God’s people, and a barrier to righteous worship. What idol does Jesus warn His disciples about?

**How to Relate to Others (Matt. 7:1-12):** At the end of the sermon Jesus again returns to our attitude toward others.

Matthew 7:12 summarizes what this attitude should be, *“whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them”* (Matt. 7:12). How does Matthew 7:12 help you deal with someone’s faults? (See Matt. 7:1-6)

What is God’s attitude toward us when we come to Him in prayer? (See Matt. 7:7-11)

**Choose Your Path (Matt. 7:13-27):** The wisdom literature in the Old Testament often asks the reader to choose between two paths: The way of wisdom that leads to life, or the way of foolishness that leads to death. Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with the same choice.

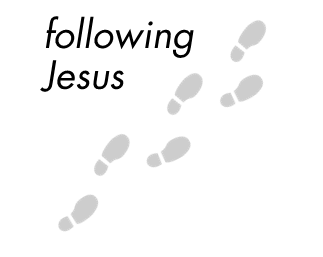
Read this section and identify the two choices in each section.

The two choices of Matt. 7:13-14

The two choices of Matt. 7:15-20

The two choices of Matt. 7:21-23

The two choices of Matt. 7:24-27



***Ears to Hear***

*Disciples think differently about* ***Prayer***

*Lesson #5 (Part 3)*

*The teachings of Jesus (Part 3)*

*(What Jesus taught the Twelve in Galilee and Judea following their selection.)*

The disciples spent time with Jesus watching His miracles and listening to his words. These were the public things that wowed the crowds. However, Jesus’ closest disciples saw the private practice that held Him together and strengthened His soul—it was the way He prayed.

There was something different about how Jesus prayed. The Twelve wanted to learn how to pray like Jesus. So, they asked Jesus, *“Lord, teach us to pray”* (Luke 11:1). Some of the Twelve learned from John the Baptizer the importance of prayer, but there was something about Jesus’ prayer life they needed to learn.

Like the Twelve we know the importance of prayer, but we need Jesus to teach us when and how to pray. It is easy to look religious, but not pray very much. However, it is impossible to follow Jesus unless you exercise the privilege of prayer. We need to ask afresh, “Lord, teach us to pray!”

When you want to learn something, you ask an expert. When it came to prayer, Jesus is an expert. He didn’t just preach about prayer, He practiced it.

**The Prayer Life of Jesus**

***Jesus prayed about ordinary things*** like His daily food. In the Gospels, whenever Jesus distributes food, he first prays for it. Yet, when Jesus prayed for ordinary things like food, extraordinary things happened. He prayed over a small basket of bread and fish, and then feed 5,000 people with twelve baskets left over (Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-9). He prayed for the food at the last Passover and gave new significance to the bread and the cup (Matt. 26:26-29). After His resurrection, Jesus prayed for the food with two disciples and at that moment they knew Jesus was alive (Luke 24:30-31).

Prayer for an ordinary thing like bread ended up giving extraordinary glory to God! When we give God the glory for the “little things” in our lives, then God can use us to do greater things that give Him glory.

***Jesus found rejuvenation in private prayer.*** Withdrawing to pray alone was a constant practice of Jesus’ life (Matt. 14:23). To Him prayer was not just a religious ceremony to be done in the synagogue, nor just a custom before meals, and not just a last resort in times of trial. Whether late at night or early in the morning, Jesus had to make time to be alone with His Father (Mark 1:35). And after each time of private prayer, He arose to do something significant for God (Luke 5:15-16).

***Jesus often prayed for others.*** He prayed for his friend Peter, that Satan would not destroy his faith (Luke 22:31-22). He prayed for God to protect and use the Twelve after His death (John 17:6-19). He prayed for all believers to follow the words of the apostles and to be unified in their faith (John 17:20-26). He prayed for His enemies to be forgiven (Luke 23:34). Jesus’ prayers were as selfless as His life. He cared about the spiritual needs of those around Him.

***Jesus prayed for significant decisions in life.*** Jesus was just like us, He often had tough choices to make; ones that would lead Him closer or further away from God’s will; so, he prayed about them first. He prayed when He was baptized, to start His public ministry (Luke 3:22). He prayed before choosing the Twelve apostles (Luke 6:12). Jesus prayed many times before facing the cross (Matt. 26:36-46). No wonder Jesus lived so wisely and obediently, He was praying.

***Jesus prayed at troublesome moments in life.*** One reason Jesus never gave in to despair and hopelessness is because He prayed at the troublesome moments in life. When His friend Lazarus died, Jesus prayed (John 11:41-42). When Jesus faced His own morality, not as the result of disease or age, but from the torturous hatred of people, Jesus found strength in prayer (Luke 22:43). When He suffered unimaginable pain on the cross He again turned to prayer. When He didn’t understand why God allowed all this He cried, *“My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?”* When His enemies spit at Him and cursed Him Jesus prayed, *“Father forgive them.”* When He struggled to take His last breath, it was a prayer, *“Into your hands I commit My spirit.”* And once again, Heaven heard!

***Two Lessons from Jesus’ Prayer Life***

***Pray Constantly*.** Jesus prayed in the morning, and at night. He prayed for ordinary things, and for the heavy things. He prayed, “Thank you!” And He prayed, “Help Me!” In every experience of life Jesus was breathing a prayer. *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thess. 5:17). If Jesus, the perfect, sinless Son of God depended so constantly are prayer, should sinful, weak people like us depend upon it any less?

***Heaven Responds When People Pray*.** It was when Jesus *prayed* that Heaven opened up and declared, “This is My Son!” It was when Jesus *prayed* that the angels were sent from heaven to give Him strength. It was when Jesus *prayed* that Satan was repelled. It was when Jesus *prayed* that life came to him who was dead. It was when Jesus prayed, that the hungry were fed. Jesus was triumphant in the opportunities God presented Him because He had immersed Himself in prayer.

**The Five “P’s” Of Prayer**

(See Matthew 6:5-14)

***Person (Praise).*** *“Our Father, in heaven. Hallowed be Your name.”*

***Purpose.*** *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

*God’s Purpose for Others (Intercession)*

*God’s Purpose for You (Personal Petitions)*

***Provision.*** *“Give us this day our daily bread.”*

***Pardon.*** *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”*

***Protection.*** *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

**P-R-A-Y**

(A brief, memorable way to remember the basic elements of prayer)

***P — Prayer Is for Praise***

*“To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”* (Jude 25).

***R — Prayer Is for Repentance***

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

***A — Prayer Is for Asking***

*“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.”* (1 Tim. 2:1)

***Y — Prayer Is for Yourself***

*“Help me, O Lord my God! Save me according to your steadfast love!”* (Psalm 109:26)

**The Content of Prayer**

***Jesus’ Model Prayer. Read Luke 11:1-4***

Trying to use a fork to eat soup can be frustrating, because that is not the purpose of a fork! Similarly, we don’t understand why prayer doesn’t give us the peace and power the Scriptures promises, because we don’t use prayer as God intended. The first thing Jesus taught the Twelve was what to pray about.

Read through each line of Jesus’ model prayer and answer two questions: “What is the topic of this line?” and “How can I pray this today?”

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The Text** | **The Topic** | **The Meaning** |
| *Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.* |  |  |
| *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.* |  |  |
| *Give us day by day our daily bread.* |  |  |
| *And forgive us our sins,*  *For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.* |  |  |
| *And do not lead us into temptation,*  *But deliver us from the evil one.”* |  |  |

**The Confidence of Prayer**

***A Friend at Midnight. Read Luke 11:5-8***

How is God like the friend in Jesus’ illustration?

How is God different from the friend in Jesus’ illustration?

***A Father Who Gives. Read Luke 11:9-13***

What kind of gifts does a loving father give a son?

How does this relate to prayer?

If God answers prayer with “good gifts” then how should we pray? (i.e. the meaning of “ask, seek, knock.”)

***A Judge Who Helps. Read Luke 18:1-8***

Why did Jesus tell the story about the persistent widow? (See. Luke 18:1)

How is God like the judge in Jesus’ illustration?

How is God different from the judge in Jesus’ illustration?

***The Tax-Collector Who Is Heard. Read Luke 18:9-14***

Why did Jesus tell the story about Pharisees and the Tax Collector? (Luke 18:9)

What made the Pharisee’s prayer unacceptable?

What made the Tax-Collector’s prayer so acceptable?

***Traveling on My Knees***

Last night I took a journey

To a land across the seas;

I did not go by boat or plane,

I traveled on my knees.

I saw so many people there

In the deepest depths of sin,

But Jesus told me I should go,

That there were souls to win.

But I said, “Jesus I cannot go

And work with such as these.”

He answered quickly, “Yes you can

By traveling on your knees.”

He said, “You pray; I’ll meet the need,

You call and I will hear;

Be concerned about lost souls,

Of those both far and near.”

And so I tried it, knelt in prayer,

Gave up some hours of ease;

I felt the Lord right by my side

While traveling on my knees.

As I prayed on and saw souls saved

And twisted bodies healed,

And saw God’s workers’ strength renewed

While laboring on the field.

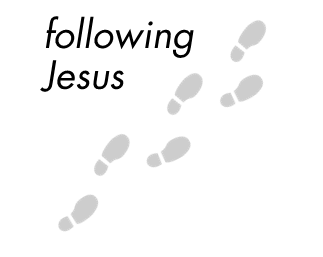
I said, “Yes, Lord I have a job,

My desire Thy will to please;

I can go and heed Thy call

By traveling on my knees.”

—Sandra Goodwin



***Ears to Hear***

*Disciples think differently about* ***Religion***

*Lesson #5 (Part 4)*

*The teachings of Jesus (Part 4)*

*(What Jesus taught the Twelve in Galilee and Judea following their selection.)*

Nobody likes a phony. We don’t like to be deceived. Yet, all too often we accept phony religion. In America, it seems that religion is a fine thing as long as it does not interfere with the business of living. We’re like the little boy who on his way home from worship and prayed, “Dear God, we’ll see you again next week.”

We can put our faith on autopilot and think we are soaring right along, when in reality we are so far away from God we’re not even on His radar screen. Religion is fertile ground for the cultivation of self-deception. In the Gospel account, it was often the most ardent, zealous, knowledge religionist who were totally self-deceived about their standing before God. The scribes and Pharisees took their faith seriously, and they were seriously off base.

That sends a shiver down my spine. Do I somehow think I’m better than they were? That I can escape the trap of self-deceived religion? Do I really think I’m above appearing to be religious on the outside while being far away from God outside? Not at all.

That’s why Jesus was to regularly contrast real religion with the fake. Religion in Jesus’ day was widespread, but it was not real. Toward the end of His ministry Jesus exposed the artificial religion in a series of “woes” or “condemnations” in Matthew 23. From this chapter, we can see a number of signs of false religion.

**Artificial Religion**

***False Religion Does Not Practice What It Preaches (Matt. 23:1-4).*** The Scribes and Pharisees loved to the authority of speaking the Law, but they did not do it. They were happy to bind heavy loads of obedience on the people, but they did not lift a finger to help them. Those when genuine faith love God’s word, and they are quick to admit their shortcomings, repent, and move in God’s direction.

***False Religion Is Done for Earthly Rewards (Matt. 23:5-7, 13-15).*** Our faith is not intended to be kept private, it is to be lived among people. This can create a problem for our pride. We can let ambition become our god, “loving the best places,” and we can let pride be our motive, “loving to be called Rabi.” This kind of religion is about self, not God or the salvation of others. It is a false faith. When others do see our faith, and they should, our goal should be that God is glorified and people are saved. Jesus said, *“let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* (Matt. 5:16). Don’t confuse “show time religion” with the real thing! One needs God and the other one doesn’t. Real religion is practiced before an audience of one no matter how many other people are around.

***False Religion Exalts the Will of People Over the Word of God (Matt. 23:16-22).*** The Scribes and Pharisees used religion as a “loophole” for obeying the Law of Moses. The Law said you should not lie, but false religion comes up with all kinds of ways a person can lie and still feel “religious.” When people elevate the word of their “pastor” or their “church” above what the Bible teaches they have created a false religion. This often happens with issues and sins that are popular in culture. Believers want to be accepted by their culture, but still feel religious, so they come up with a way for the will of the people to be acceptable with the word of God. In so doing, they corrupt both.

***False Religion Emphasizes the Externals Over the Heart (Matt. 23:23-28).*** The Scribes and Pharisees were very careful to give a tenth of all their spices to the Lord, but they were not as careful to obey significant commands about justice, mercy and faith. In religion there is always the challenge to substitute the external and easy, for the difficult transformation of the heart and obedience. Jesus tells us that a religion that is content with ritual and externals is like a whitewashed tomb…it looks good on the outside, but inside it is full of death. *“you outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness”* (Matt. 23:28).

Jesus came to model what genuine devotion to God looks like. Early on Jesus put the Twelve in situations where the radiance of true religion shines in brilliant contrast to religion gone wrong. He wants His disciples to have a totally different view of religion.

**What Real Religion Looks Like**

***Religion and Washing Your Hands. Read Matthew 15:1-28***

The scribes and Pharisees were highly religious, yet Jesus said, their worship was worthless, and their hearts were far from God because they fell into the traps of artificial religion. They are not the only ones, but Jesus doesn’t want that to happen to us.

There did the teaching about washing hands come from?

How does the way the scribes and Pharisees treated their parents reveal how they handled the Law?

Why does real religion spring from inward attitudes and not outward acts? (see Matt. 15:10-20)

How does a Gentile woman from Tyre and Sidon illustrate genuine faith in contrast to the highly religious scribe and Pharisees? (see Matt. 15:21-28)

***Religion and Wineskins. Read Matthew 9:9-17***

We are always tempted to add a little religion to our lives, and continue to live by most other people do. However, Jesus revealed that real religion is not about adding a little new to the old you. It is about being a whole new you.

What reason did Jesus give for not fasting as others did?

What happens with a new patch is put on an old garment? What happens when new wine is put in old wineskins? What is the solution to this problem?

How did the Pharisees reaction to Jesus eating with sinners at Matthew’s house illustrate the message of the wineskins?

***Religion and the Sabbath. Read Matthew 12:1-21***

God commanded Israel to “keep the Sabbath day holy.” They were to remember the Lord and refrain from work. Through the years, the Pharisees carefully defined what it meant to “work” on the Sabbath. Their regulations subtracted God and compassion out of the day which was meant to bring God and man closer together. Jesus used the Sabbath as a teaching moment about what real religion looks like.

What were Jesus’ disciples doing on the Sabbath that the Pharisees thought was sinful?

What did Jesus want the Pharisees to learn about the example of David? (Matt. 12:7)

What were the Pharisees willing to do on the Sabbath if an animal fell into a ditch? How did this reveal their hypocrisy?