

Journey Into Discipleship

Volume I

Introduction through Sermon 10

Dr. L.D. Thomas

The *Journey Into Discipleship* sermon series, based on the so-called “Travel Document” in Luke 9:51-19:27, was originally preached by the late Dr. L.D. Thomas at First United Methodist Church, Tulsa, from 1979-1981. They are presented here in edited form in five volumes of ten sermons each. The introduction and the worksheets which follow each sermon were prepared by Mrs. Harriett Thomas and Mrs. Sandy Heiser.

Unless otherwise noted, scripture references throughout the *Journey Into Discipleship* series are from the Revised Standard Version. At the time of the original sermon series, the Revised Standard Version was the pew bible of the United Methodist Church of Tulsa.

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Foreword

Dear Class Member or Visitor,

Let us be the first to welcome you to the start of an amazing journey into discipleship!

The Journey Into Discipleship (JID) 2011 curriculum began as a series of sermons preached by Dr. L.D. Thomas from 1979-1981, here at First United. Following Dr. Thomas' untimely death in 1986, his spouse Harriet along with Sandy Heiser re-fashioned these powerful messages into a small group study program. Then for quite a few years, *Journey Into Discipleship* lay dormant on a shelf.

Jerry Toops shares the next chapter in the life of JID:

I arrived at a place in my life of near total burnout in December of 2008. I gave all of myself to Jesus at that point and he led me to these sermons. As I prepared to teach the JID curriculum in 2009, I found new life and God sent just the right persons to walk with me in the process. *Journey into Discipleship* has been a wonderful experience in my life for the past two years.

We wondered: might God also bless others in the church through JID? In late 2009 we began a "pilot project" with a few Sunday morning classes, using JID as the curriculum. They soon began to share about the transformation that was occurring in their classes, and they encouraged us to consider JID as a resource for the entire church. Over the last several months, we have been hard at work—both physically and spiritually—to make this material ready for our adult Sunday morning classes.

So here we are! *Journey into Discipleship 2011* has the potential to transform us as a church, as we learn once again to follow Jesus' example. This is no small thing.

We look forward to walking this journey with you. Please know that we are praying for you. As disciples ourselves who seek to grow in love, mercy and obedience, we ask for your prayers as well.

Dr. Wade Paschal, Senior Pastor
Dr. Jerry Toops, Director of Healing Ministries
Rev. Thomas Hoffmann, Minister of Adult Learning

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Introduction

Purpose

You are invited to accompany Jesus and His first disciples as they walk from an area north of Galilee southward to Jerusalem. You can listen along with the Twelve as Jesus teaches what it really means to be His follower. Each chapter consists of one sermon and an accompanying worksheet designed to help you make your own personal *Journey into Discipleship*. You can make this journey by yourself, but like the first disciples you may find that Jesus calls you to be a part of a small group and share your responses with others.

Three-Part Plan of Worksheets

- I. Explore the Sermon — The questions in the first section are designed to help you explore your personal responses to the Discipleship Lesson and the basic truths presented in the sermon.
- II. Search the Scriptures — In this section related scriptures are suggested along with questions for thought and personal application.
- III. Internalize God's Word — Suggestions are given in the final section for making the Word of God a vital part of your life.

Suggestions for using this material as a basis for your daily quiet time

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| Day One | Read the sermon and begin the memory scripture. Continue scripture memory daily. |
| Day Two | Review the sermon and answer questions under section I — Explore the Sermon. |
| Day Three | Begin section II — Search the Scriptures. |
| Day Four | Conclude section II. |
| Day Five | Follow the suggestions in section III — Internalize God's Word. |
| Day Six | Review all of your work before meeting with your partner or small group. If you are working alone, review is still recommended. |

How to use this material as a basis for discussion in your small group

In advance of the meeting the designated leader should plan discussion questions in each area: I.—Explore the Sermon, II.—Search the Scriptures, and III.— Internalize God's Word. He may use questions from the worksheet, adapting them to the needs of his group, or he may prefer to plan his own questions. The following suggestions will be helpful.

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Planning the Discussion

1. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no response.
2. Design questions to elicit response to scriptural teaching, not merely surface expression of opinion (or prejudice).
3. Make sure that all know the Discipleship Lesson and basic truths (main points) of the sermon.
4. Include questions that call for an expression of personal response to the teaching
 - An applicable personal experience or that of an acquaintance
 - Relationship to current events or trends
 - Expressions of agreement, disagreement, confusion, doubt, etc.
 - Additional meaningful scriptures

Leading the Discussion

5. If the group is new and not yet ready to share freely, the leader may need to answer his own questions at first in order to get discussion started.
6. Be prepared with discussion questions in all three areas, but don't cut off a lively discussion in order to use them all. Beware of "Agenda Anxiety."
7. Give everyone an opportunity to respond to each question, but don't put anyone on the spot. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a gift of discernment so that the shy person will not be embarrassed and the aggressive one will not dominate or get the discussion off into time-consuming, unproductive argument or opinionating.
8. Trust God to use both your weaknesses and your strengths as you prepare and while you are leading the group.

Foundational Beliefs

These sermons and worksheets are based upon the following foundational beliefs about scripture:

God's Part

God's Word is Revealed, Inspired, and Illuminated by the Holy Spirit

The truths of scripture are not the conclusions reached by man's intelligence, but truths revealed by God Himself through the Holy Spirit.

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit (1 Cor 2:9-10).

God's Word is Creative and Sustaining

God created the universe in the beginning through His spoken Word, and He sustains it through that Word.

And God said . . . (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 24, 26).

In the beginning was the Word . . . all things were made through him. . . (Jn 1:1-3).

[Jesus is] upholding the universe by his word of power (Heb 1:3b).

God's Word Accomplishes Purpose

God's Word always accomplishes His purpose. There is power in the Word of God.

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Is 55:10-11).

God's Word is Living and Active

God's Word discerns what's in our hearts; it cuts out the malignancies that would destroy, and brings new life.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb 4:12).

"You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you" (Jn 15:3).

God's Word is Life-Giving

The new birth comes through the Word of God — the living Word of God in the Spirit, and the abiding Word of God in the Son — which we come to know through the written Word of God in the Bible.

You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; . . . "but the word of the Lord abides for ever." That word is the good news which was preached to you (1 Pe 1:23,25).

God's Word is Healing

God heals through His Word.

He sent forth His word, and healed them (Ps 107:20).

"...only say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Mt 8:8b).

Our Part

How can we tap into this power source? How can we internalize the Word of God so that God can accomplish His purposes for our lives—creating, sustaining, discerning, healing us and giving us life? God commands us not only to hide His word in our heart (Ps 119:11) but also to eat it. The scroll

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of the book was handed to Ezekiel and he was told to take and eat. Ezekiel said, *“Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey”* (Ezek 3:3). Jeremiah said, *“Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart . . .”* (Jer 15:16). Jesus tells us that man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt 4:4).

Just as different foods meet different needs in our bodies — building bone and muscle, providing energy and different kinds of nourishment — so the scriptures meet the different needs of our spirits — nourishing, empowering, guiding, enlightening, convicting, encouraging. God provides the food, but He doesn’t spoon feed us. Each of us must lift the spoon ourselves, take a bite, chew, swallow, allow the digestive process to take place and the scripture to do its work. In our *Journey into Discipleship* we use a number of methods to internalize God’s Word.

When we study the Bible we use the left brain to gain knowledge. It is absolutely essential that we do this; otherwise, our insights from scripture will be the product of our own imaginations, purely subjective. We’ll create God in our own image and scripture will tell us only what we want to hear (Prov 30:5-6). However, in addition to thoughtful study we recommend ways that use the right-brain, intuitive part of ourselves, and combinations of both. Remember God’s promises about His Word.

“If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me” (Jn 14: 23-25).

Methods

The following means of Internalizing God’s Word are used in Section III of the worksheets.

Scripture Memory

Some of us have the mind-set firmly established within us that says, “I just can’t memorize scripture.” But both the Old and New Testaments make it plain that God expects us to do just that.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 6:4-9).

In His last hours with His disciples, Jesus emphasized again and again that if we love Him, His words will abide in us (see Jn 14:15-26 and 15:7-10). God does not command us to do anything He does not enable us to do. Moses gives us God's promise:

"For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'" But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deut 30:11-14).

When you memorize, remember it is between you and God. You are not going to have to recite a verse word-perfect before an audience. Your heavenly Father Who loves you has told you something He wants you to know. Of course you want to remember it. The Hebrews wrote it on the doorposts of their house. You can write it on a 3 x 5 card to carry with you to review throughout the day. Trust the Holy Spirit to keep His promise — *"The word is very near you, in your mouth, so you can do it!"*

Scriptural Journaling and Paraphrase

There is no right or wrong way to journal. Simply get a plain notebook and pen or pencil. Keep it in a place that's safe from other eyes. Write a note on the outside about privacy. Use it to write down thoughts that come to you as you read the Bible. Ask God to speak to your needs through His written Word. Listen for His answers. Write them down. Rewrite meaningful passages in your own words, making it personal, using your own name.

Praying God's Word

Scripture Prayer is more than a process of the mind, or even of the will and emotions. It is experiencing God's Word personally, using the God-given imaging process under the guidance of His Holy Spirit. **Steps in Praying God's Word** found in the Appendix will help you get started. (Worksheets make frequent references to this page.)

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Helpful Tool

See the back of each Volume for Discipleship Lesson and Scripture cards which can be cut out for personal use.

Explore the Introduction

1. The Introduction explains (1) the Purpose of this course, (2) the Three-Part Plan, (3) the Foundational Beliefs about God's Word and (4) the Methods used. If you feel uncomfortable with any of the explanations given, make a note of them to discuss with your small group, or in personal prayer with your Father.
2. Many Christians have not begun their own *Journey into Discipleship*. Some have begun the journey but have gotten detoured or discouraged. Others who consider themselves Christian have actually never been converted; that is they haven't yet experienced Jesus' forgiving love personally. Describe where you are in your walk with the Lord.
3. When Jesus' first disciples made this journey, it was not a solo flight, but a small group walking together. Each person was unique in personality, character, talents, education etc. What did they all have in common, i.e., what brought them together?

Search the Scriptures

4. Write a word or phrase that summarizes each of the following scriptures.
Rom 8:29 | Eph 4:15b | 2 Cor 3:18 | Eph 4:13 | 1 Jn 3:2
5. According to these scriptures, what is God's goal for you? Is it possible to reach that goal? (See Lk 18:27)
6. Read 2 Cor. 3:18 again. Who changes us? What is our part?

Internalize God's Word

7. What is your personal goal in this study?

Is your goal worth making certain commitments such as specific times of study and prayer, participation with others, application of lessons to your daily living, internalizing God's Word, etc.?

What commitments are you willing to make — and keep?
8. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. Ask God what He is saying to you about your *Journey into Discipleship* through this scripture. Wait. Listen. Write His answer in your Journal. If you are not sure of His answer, just rewrite this passage in your own words as it applies to you today. God speaks to us through His Word!

Memory scripture: 2 Cor 3:18.

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Sermon 1: Getting Started

Why was the first Christian Church so dynamic? Why did it actually continue carrying on the same mighty works that Jesus did while He was here on earth? It's because Jesus trained His followers to be disciples. Jesus nurtured them. He helped them to grow into Christian maturity, and in turn they made disciples of their own converts. The final words which Jesus spoke to the eleven were not "Go, and make converts", but "Go and make disciples." This is still His Great Commission to His church: "Make disciples!" Conversion is essential, yes, but it's only the first step. Jesus calls each converted Christian to become a mature disciple, so let's start together on a *Journey Into Discipleship*.

Fortunately for us, we have the perfect leader and the perfect teacher for this journey as we travel together the same road the Twelve traveled with Jesus. Like them, let's listen as He teaches us to become mature, courageous Christians so we too can carry on His three-fold ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing, and actually fulfill His words,

"...greater works than these will you do, because I go to the Father" (Jn14:12).

Mark spends just one chapter, chapter 10, telling us about what happened as Jesus made His last journey with His disciples from outside of Galilee to Jerusalem, a trip of approximately one hundred miles. Mark tells us that as they walked along Jesus taught His disciples, but he tells us very little about what Jesus actually taught them. It's the same with Matthew's Gospel, although Matthew expands it into two chapters, chapters 19 and 20. But to Luke the *Journey Into Discipleship* was the very essence of the scriptural message that Christians would need as they fulfilled their commission in the future. Of twenty-four chapters of his Gospel, Luke devotes ten full chapters — Luke 9:51 through 19:27 — to this journey and to the discipleship lessons that Jesus teaches as they travel.

Biblical scholars call these ten chapters in Luke by two different names. Some call it simply *The Travel Document*, signifying that it all occurred during this last journey. Others call it *The Great Insertion* because these ten chapters contain most of the material that Luke inserted into Mark's basic Gospel (except for the birth story in chapters 1 and 2). In these ten chapters Luke describes for us fifty separate and distinct lessons on discipleship.

I urge you to refer to your own Bible. Mark these lessons in the margins; keep your notebook nearby for recording the basic truths in each lesson; and incorporate them into your own life. If you do, then like the Twelve before you, when you have finished this journey with our Lord, you will

Scripture

Luke 9:51-56

Text

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

Luke 9:54, 55 KJV

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have moved a long, long way toward mature discipleship and the power and the joy that comes with it.

There's one other word of introduction before we get started on our *Journey Into Discipleship* — Luke does not write down these lessons chronologically; rather he writes them down logically. That is, he doesn't begin with the first thing that Jesus says outside of Galilee near Mt. Hermon in Syria where the journey begins, and then proceed to relate in sequence each thing that Jesus says. Rather, for our benefit, Luke arranges these discipleship lessons logically. He arranges them in the order that you and I need them in order to make our own *Journey Into Discipleship*. Consequently, each lesson builds upon the lesson before it. The first lesson that Luke records is one that Jesus actually taught in Samaria, after they had completed approximately two-thirds of the journey. Luke starts here because this is where all of us must start our *Journey Into Discipleship*; this is the key to everything else which follows.

To set the scene for this first lesson, let's turn to Luke 9:51-56. Jesus and His disciples are in Samaria, the province in Palestine lying between Galilee on the north, and Judea on the south. Seven or eight hundred years earlier, when the Israelites were taken into captivity in Babylon, some of the Jews in Samaria were allowed to remain behind because they had intermarried with the heathen Assyrians. When the faithful Jews returned from the captivity in Babylon and Nehemiah began rebuilding the great Zion wall, these polluted Samaritans were his bitter enemies, opposing and obstructing construction. Furthermore the Samaritans were considered blasphemous heretics who rejected all of the Old Testament scriptures except the first five books of Moses. They had built their own temple in Samaria on Mt. Gerizim, where loyal and faithful Samaritans were required to worship instead of in the "true" temple of God in the holy city of Jerusalem.

As Jesus and His disciples, all Jews, come near a Samaritan village Jesus sends messengers into the village to make arrangements for the night. The messengers return saying the Samaritans not only reject Jesus but even refuse to give them food or lodging. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are furious. Their natural reaction is to strike back at the hated Samaritans, so they turn to Jesus and blurt out, "Lord do you want us to burn them down? Do you want us to burn down the village? That's what they deserve!" They are not thinking so much of miracle fire from heaven destroying the village, as they are thinking of themselves as self-righteous heavenly instruments to "burn the rascals out." Jesus turns and rebukes them, and according to the most ancient manuscripts, says to them,

"..Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Lk 9:55-56).

This is our first lesson on this *Journey Into Discipleship*. This is the key to everything else — the way to stay on the right road for the rest of this

journey. If you miss this first lesson, you will find yourself on rough, unmarked, treacherous detours the rest of the trip. If you grasp and internalize this very important lesson, you have set your face in the same direction as Jesus and you will be traveling with Him the rest of the way, your destination assured. Here is that first lesson. Write it down and internalize it.

Discipleship Lesson #1

**A disciple does not react to other people;
he responds to Jesus as the Lord of his life.**

Jesus rebukes James and John because they are *reacting* to the Samaritans instead of *responding* to Jesus as the Lord of their lives. Their feelings, their words, their actions are actually being controlled by these heathen Samaritans instead of by Jesus. They are putting themselves into bondage even though Jesus came to set them free. You see, when we go through life simply reacting to what other people do and say, we actually put our lives in their hands. Even though it's the very last thing in the world that we want, these people are actually controlling us — what we think, what we say, what we do. We truly put ourselves in bondage to them. On the other hand, a Christian disciple has only one master, our Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian disciple begins his *Journey Into Discipleship* by putting himself under the complete dominion and control of the Spirit of our living Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit! He does what Jesus commands; he responds to the guidance and leading of our Lord's living Spirit. He has only one Master, the perfect Master, the very Son of God Himself.

Who is your master today? Are you going through life simply reacting to other people? Or have you taken this first step of your *Journey Into Discipleship* by putting yourself under the dominion and control of the Lord Jesus Christ? Let's apply the truth our Lord has given us in this first lesson on discipleship to our own daily lives. When we reject the non-Christian way of life — reacting to other people — for God's way of life — responding to Jesus as Lord — then three things happen.

- We begin to redeem instead of alienate other people.
- We avoid getting sidetracked and missing our main goal in life.
- We begin to experience the joy and excitement of a life of love instead of the misery, pain, and defeat of a life of revenge.

I. We begin to redeem instead of alienate other people.

In the fourth chapter of his Gospel John tells us about another journey that Jesus and His disciples made through Samaria early in Jesus' ministry. On that first trip Jesus meets a woman from the Samaritan town of Sychar at Jacob's well. Instead of reacting to her as James and John later reacted to the Samaritans, Jesus, Who was full of the Holy Spirit, redeemed this

woman and led her into a whole new life. Don't misunderstand me. Jesus didn't close His eyes to her heresies and her immorality; on the contrary He led her to face up to them and renounce them. Why? Because He offered her something better, that's why. When Jesus says to James and John, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," He means, "You are not of the spirit of the evil one, who tears down and destroys, but you are of the Spirit of Jesus Who came to redeem and save lives."

As I counsel with Christian husbands and wives, I often feel like saying the same thing: "You don't know what spirit you are of." Many go through life reacting to one another's faults, instead of responding to the Spirit of Jesus as their Lord. Consequently they are constantly alienating each other instead of redeeming each other. They live in great pain and misery instead of experiencing the joy and excitement that God wants for them. After many years of marriage counseling, both as a lawyer and as a pastor, I'm convinced that the best thing most couples can do for their marriage is to take this first step into discipleship: stop reacting to each other, and start responding to Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives.

II. We avoid getting sidetracked and missing our main goal in life.

Look at James and John. The goal which Jesus has set for them is a high goal: becoming mature disciples so that they can continue His ministry after the Cross. But somehow this great goal is forgotten; they have in its place the petty goal of destroying the Samaritans. This is what happens to all of us when we miss the first step in discipleship and continue to react to people instead of responding to Christ as the Lord of our lives.

The best illustration that I can think of to drive home this truth is the current conflict between conservative and liberal elements within most Protestant denominations and within the Catholic Church as well. Of course we cannot and we must not ignore unscriptural positions and heretical public statements coming out of our church boards of agencies, just as Jesus did not ignore the heresies and blasphemies of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. To do so would be dishonest, and to turn our beloved Church over to the enemy. Also, we must not ignore the irresponsible statements and the half truths about free enterprise and our American form of government that is often published as official literature, just as Jesus did not ignore the immorality of the woman at the well. If we let this sidetrack us into petty little goals such as going out "to get" certain persons in national leadership who are responsible for these heresies, we've missed the whole point altogether. Jesus didn't come to destroy but to redeem and to save.

Our goal must be the goal set for us by Jesus, and that is to redeem our great Church from heresies and propaganda into the dynamic instrument for Jesus Christ that God wants it to be. That must be our goal. To do that, all of us must first take this great first step into discipleship — stop reacting to people and start responding to Jesus as the Lord of our lives. This alone

can keep us from getting sidetracked from our main goal and spending our time and talents on little petty goals that have no eternal significance.

III. We begin to experience the joy and excitement of a life of love instead of the misery, pain, and defeat of a life of revenge.

“Ye know not what spirit ye are of,” Jesus says to James and John. You see, what James and John wanted to do was the reaction of every natural man and woman. Our natural reaction is always to strike back. But when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, we are no longer meant to be natural men and women who live their lives on the very same level as the animals of the field.

... the old has passed away, behold, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17b).

That’s the good news. When Jesus Christ comes into our lives, we are meant to be spiritual men and women, redeemed to our rightful places as persons created in the image of God. We are meant to be persons under the control of God’s Holy Spirit, filled with God’s love. We are meant to live by God’s truth, assured, empowered and enlightened by God’s Spirit. We are meant to produce all of the fruit of the Spirit beginning with love and joy. We are meant to be equipped for life with God’s supernatural gifts, so that the powers of hell cannot prevail against us. This is our inheritance as “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:7) In order to claim our inheritance we must take the *Journey Into Discipleship*, and that journey must always begin with this first step.

Discipleship Lesson #1

**A disciple does not react to other people;
he responds to Jesus as the Lord of his life.**

When we take this first step, the practical results are almost immediate. We begin to redeem instead of alienate others. Our eyes are on the goal God has set for us instead of every petty trifle that comes along. Most important we begin to rise above the misery, pain, and bitterness around us to experience the love, joy, and excitement that God wants to bestow. God has not left us desolate; through Jesus He has shown us step by step what it means to grow up, get off the bottle, and start eating meat. He has shown us how to become mature Christians so we can do something about this world in which we live. My prayer for you is that you will actually get started today on this exciting, joyful *Journey into Discipleship*. Bon voyage!

NOTES

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #1?
2. When we choose to respond to Jesus instead of reacting to others, what three things happen?
(The main points — basic truths — of each sermon are usually set out in bold print and numbered with Roman numerals.)
3. From your own experience give an example of reacting to other people instead of responding to Jesus.
4. From your own experience give an example of choosing to respond to Jesus instead of allowing someone else to “push your button”.

Search the Scriptures

5. When we react to someone instead of responding to the Lord, we are in bondage to that person. How can that bondage be cut?

Jn 8:31, 32, 36 | Rom 8:2 | 2 Cor 3:17 | Gal 5:1 | Heb 4:12

Internalize God's Word

6. Read Luke 9:51-56. Pray this scripture using Steps for Praying God's Word in the Appendix. Put yourself in the place of the disciples. Put someone to whom you are “bound” — someone you allow to control your responses — in place of the Samaritans.
7. Write down what you believe God is saying to you in Discipleship Lesson #1 — both the areas where He is affirming you in your habitual responses, and those areas where He is showing you changes He wants to enable you to make. Share these with your partner or small group and ask them to hold you accountable.

Memory scripture: Hebrews 4:12

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Sermon 2: The Condition of Discipleship

We find our second discipleship lesson in the account of three would-be disciples who start to make the *Journey into Discipleship*, but drop out because of other priorities. Later in a similar discipleship lesson (Parable of the Great Banquet in chapter 14) Jesus points out three things which men and women tend to put first: investments, business, and family. In this lesson however, He deals with only the last of these. All three of these would-be-disciples decided to put off discipleship because of that which is dearest and most precious to all of us — our home and family.

- The first was reluctant to follow Jesus because it would require him to leave home.
- The second was reluctant because his elderly father needed him until his death.
- The third was reluctant to follow Jesus until he could go back home just one more time to check on his precious family.

All of them in one way or another wanted to put home and family first, and Jesus second. And what's wrong with that? How can anything be of more importance to a human being than home and family? Didn't God set us in families and then tell us in the Ten Commandments to honor our fathers and mothers? Surely Jesus didn't come to contradict God. The fact is, Luke chose this subject which is so dear to all of us, to make a point that no person can miss, and that point is our Lord's second discipleship lesson.

Discipleship Lesson #2

A disciple's number one priority in life must be following Jesus.

This is the *Condition of Discipleship* — the condition that must be met before anyone can be a disciple. To be a disciple your Number One priority in life must be following Jesus. Jesus never tried to win anyone by false pretenses. He makes it perfectly clear that nothing else in our life can "lord" it over Him, not even our home and our family. If He is truly to be the Lord of our life, He must be Number One.

Why is this so? It's so because discipleship is not what we do for Christ; it's what He is able to do through us, for others. It's axiomatic that only that part of our life which is subject to Christ can be blessed and used by Him. Christ calls us to follow Him as His disciples so He can carry on His ministry through us, not so we can carry on our own ministry. He empowers us as His disciples to be His body here on earth, not to go around "doing our own thing." If my marriage is not subject to His lordship, there is no way He can bless my wife through me, or bless me through her. If my home

Scripture

Luke 9:57-62 and
14:16-24

Text

Jesus said to him,
"No one who puts his
hand to the plow and
looks back is fit for
the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:62

is not subject to Christ He cannot bless my children through me, or bless me through my children. This is perhaps the most difficult discipleship lesson of all for us to accept and put into practice in our daily lives. This is true because our home and our family are so precious and important to all of us that we tend to elevate them to the place that must be reserved for Jesus Christ alone. We begin to think that our family is so important that anything done in the name of and for the sake of our family has to be right. The sad fact is, this is so close to being true that it is tragically false.

I. Marriage

Let's see why this is so as we try to apply this second discipleship lesson to our own family situation. To be a disciple our Number One priority in life must be following Jesus Christ; that's our lesson. What does it mean? What does it mean as far as marriage is concerned? What does it mean as far as our parents, in-laws, and children are concerned? In the parable that our Lord tells later in the 14th chapter of Luke, one would-be disciple says outright:

"I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come" (Lk 14:20).

In other words, he answers our Lord's call to discipleship with: "My wife comes first, and you next. She needs me now, so you will have to wait." In chapter 9 Jesus forces the first would-be disciple to face up to the same demands by reminding him that to become a disciple he must be willing to put Christ first. He can be of no use to Christ and Christ cannot bless him until he takes this all-important step of making his Number One priority in life following Christ.

The Bible says that God created us man and woman and He made a way for us to be joined together in marriage and become as one flesh. God has provided a way to make the flesh of a husband and wife one — to make it holy. To understand this we must first understand that the word flesh in the Bible is often used as a technical word meaning all of that part of us human beings that is not spirit — our mind, our body, our emotions, and our will. In other words, God has provided a way for a man and woman to be joined together as husband and wife so they are truly together physically, psychologically and emotionally. The Bible says that this oneness was the original condition of man and woman in the paradise that God created for them, because there they were one in spirit with God; that is, they were one with each other as long as God's Spirit exercised dominion and control over their flesh. Then sin entered the picture. Self-centeredness took over, and with it man and woman had a compulsive desire to elevate their own flesh to the place reserved for God. Of course, this selfish drive separated them from God, Who alone could sanctify their flesh and make them one. This selfish drive became so much a part of all human beings and so ingrained in us that we could do nothing about it ourselves. So, God sent His only Son, Jesus, to redeem us and restore us

to right relationship with Himself. Jesus can do this only when we give Him His rightful place in our lives, the place we have given to our own flesh. Jesus can do this only when we make Him Lord of our flesh — our minds, bodies, emotions and will. Only then can He bless our marriage and perform the miracle of making us one flesh, that is, truly together physically, psychologically and emotionally.

How sad it is that so many couples never experience this heaven here on earth because they honestly think their marriage and their home should come first. Oh, they may not say it verbally, but in living out their daily lives Christ is not actually the Lord of their marriage. With their actions they say to Him, “I have married a wife (or a husband) and therefore I cannot come.” That settles it!

A marriage can be holy only when the Holy One is Lord of that marriage, and He can be the Lord of it only when following Him is the Number One priority in life. Paul says to all husband and wives,

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . (Eph 5:21-22,25).

He is not creating a legalistic chain of command under which all husbands and wives are supposed to live, as some who are still living under law would have us believe. On the contrary God is showing us the *Condition of Discipleship*, so our marriages can be recipients of His amazing grace, transformed into holy matrimony according to His plan. I seriously doubt if any person can truly be a disciple for Christ out in the world until that person is first a disciple in his own home. The home is where genuine discipleship must always begin, and it begins by getting our priorities right in that home.

II. Parents

What is true for marriage is also true in our relationships with our parents and our in-laws. The second would-be-disciple said to Jesus, “I can’t follow you because I have to go and bury my father.” By this remark he means he can’t become a disciple for Christ until his elderly father is dead and in his grave. He thinks that this, not following Christ, is his primary responsibility in life. Many people feel this way today. How sad! For such mixed-up priorities keep them from receiving all that Christ wants to give.

In one sense, every relationship in life is a binding relationship and the closer the relationship becomes the more binding it is. By binding I mean that we become so tied to a person that he controls what we do and say as if he were manipulating us with a puppet string. We get into this kind of bondage to our parents gradually and imperceptibly. We must be bonded to them when we are small children for us to stay alive. When our parents say, “Don’t touch that stove!” or “Don’t run into the street!” we learn

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to react automatically. But we can become mature psychologically and spiritually only when we are able to stop reacting to our parents and our in-laws like little children and start responding to Jesus Christ as mature Christians. This transformation can happen only through an act of our will — only when we honestly decide that our Number One priority in life is following Jesus, not our parents or our in-laws.

The good news is, when Jesus does become first in our lives, we can begin relating to our parents and in-laws as mature adults, instead of as little children near a hot stove or cars in the street. Jesus wasn't telling this would-be disciple that he had to forfeit his love and affection and responsibility for his elderly father before he could be a Christian disciple; just the opposite. Jesus loved that man's father far more than the man could ever love him. Jesus was showing him (and us) that the only way any person can love a parent or an in-law with a mature, selfless, redemptive love is by giving Jesus first place in our life. To love redemptively we must permit Christ to cut those childish bonds to our parents, so we can respond as mature Christians with the redeeming love of Christ, instead of reacting like a child. By losing our childish bondage we actually find the mature relationships God wants for us. That's the gospel. We must lose ourselves to find ourselves, and we never give up anything for Christ without receiving back 30, 60, yea 100 fold.

III. Children

Especially is this true when it comes to our relationships with our children. The last would-be-disciple just couldn't quite trust his children's lives to Christ. He was willing to trust his own life, but he had to go back home just one more time to check on his precious family. Isn't this true for all of us? It's not nearly so hard to trust Christ with our own lives as it is to trust Him with the lives of our children. Most of us still want to manipulate the lives of our children long after they are grown and have children of their own. We still think of them as ours instead of as the Lord's. We all have a secret natural desire to make our children over in our own image.

Yet the Bible warns us that whatever we bind on earth we bind in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth we loose in heaven. For several decades psychiatry has been showing us that a major cause of mental and emotional problems in adults can be traced back to possessive parents — parents who must keep going back just one more time and checking on their precious children. This is just another way of saying that the Number One priority in such homes is not Christ, but the children; yet so often these parents are Christian and want the best for their children. They honestly believe their first priority should be their children.

Dear parent, Jesus Christ loves your child much more than you can ever love him. Christ loves your child with a divine, eternal love. Christ came to this earth and died on a Cross so your child might have life and have

it abundantly. The Bible says that Christ chose your child before the foundation of the world was laid, and He has a special purpose for your child's life (Eph 1:4). Yet that purpose for your child cannot materialize until you determine that your Number One priority in life as a parent is to follow Christ and stop elevating your child to the place reserved for our Lord alone. Whatever we put before Christ as a priority in our lives we remove from His blessings. Only that which is subject to Christ can be blessed by Him. We don't show less love for our mate, or our parents, or our children, or our family by giving Christ priority over them in our lives. On the contrary, the only way we can truly love them with a pure, selfless, redeeming love is by following the second discipleship lesson: to be a disciple our Number One priority in life must be to follow Jesus!

If discipleship is ever going to begin for any of us, it must begin, not in church, but in our homes. It must begin by getting our priorities right in our homes and in our families. Being a disciple means that Jesus is not only the Lord of our religious lives; it especially means that He is also Lord in the most precious areas of our lives: our marriage, our homes and families. To be our Lord at all, He must be Lord of all of life! The good news is that when we do give Him Number One priority in our marriage, our homes and families, His divine love transforms them into what our hearts and souls have always longed for them to be. This is what Jesus wants to do for you when you take this second step on your *Journey into Discipleship*, and your Number One priority in life becomes following Him.

Discipleship Lesson #2

A disciple's number one priority in life must be following Jesus.

The Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #2?
2. This sermon deals with what three relationships? (*Note the Roman numeral headings.*)
3. How would you define, describe, or explain just what discipleship is? There are some good clues in this lesson.
4. Can you remember a situation in your own experience when putting Jesus first meant putting loved ones second? What kind of choice did you make? In retrospect, were your loved ones ultimately blessed by your choice?
5. Does putting Jesus first mean that attending a church function or serving someone in need must always take precedence over enjoying your family?
6. Can you anticipate some ways in which this lesson might help you make choices in the coming week?

Search the Scriptures

7. A current teaching for Christian families is based on Ephesians 5:21-22, 25. This is sometimes understood to mean that the chain of command comes from Christ to husband, from husband to wife, and on to children. Evaluate both the truths and the dangers of that teaching in the light of this discipleship lesson.

Internalize God's Word

8. Read Matthew 10:34-39. Using Steps in Praying God's Word (Appendix) ask Jesus what this means for you in your present situation. Make a note of any insight you receive.

Memory scripture: Matthew 10:39

Notes

Sermon 3: Your Calling as a Disciple

The first two lessons in our *Journey into Discipleship* dealt with our own personal commitment to Jesus Christ, which of course is where every would-be disciple must begin his journey. This third lesson deals with Our Calling As Disciples; that is, what we are actually called to do once we make a commitment to Jesus Christ. Many Christians go through life never quite sure what they are called to do as Christians. Yet in our scripture, Luke 10:1-16, Jesus makes it abundantly clear.

In addition to the Twelve whom Jesus chose originally, seventy others have now made the commitment to follow Him. Jesus sends the seventy out with specific instructions about what to do as His disciples. Before beginning this last journey to Jerusalem, Jesus had sent out the Twelve on a similar assignment, and He had given them the same kind of specific instruction. We are told about this in the first six verses of chapter 9 of Luke and in parallel passages in both Matthew 10 and Mark 6. So, there can be no doubt what Jesus calls His disciples to do. His instructions can be summarized like this:

- The same authority Jesus received from the Father He passes on to His disciples: authority over Satan, authority over evil, authority over disease, authority to speak and to act for God, authority to be His representatives on earth.
- He gives the disciples this authority for the specific purpose of continuing His ministry of reconciling people to God and to each other.
- He also makes it clear that the way to continue this ministry is through both speaking and acting, both telling others about the good news and showing them how it works in their lives.
- Therefore Jesus' disciples are to continue His three-fold ministry of preaching (proclaiming the gospel), teaching (explaining the gospel), and healing (applying the gospel to the lives of people).

Discipleship Lesson #3

**As disciples we are called to be the Body of Jesus Christ,
and to carry on His ministry.**

That's it! But what does it mean? First, what does it mean to be the Body of Jesus Christ? Then, what does it mean to carry on His ministry?

I. What does it mean to be the Body of Jesus Christ?

I warn you that to discover what it means to be the Body of Christ is really mind-staggering! It means that God actually has chosen to extend the

Scripture

Luke 10:1-16

Text

And he [Jesus] said to them, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go . . . heal the sick . . . and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you' . . . He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

Luke 10:2,3,9,16

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Incarnation through us, the disciples — the Church of Jesus Christ! Just as the flesh of Jesus housed the Holy Spirit of God while He was here on earth, so we, His disciples, are meant to be the earthly temple for His Holy Spirit today. What does it mean to be the Body of Jesus Christ? It means that by giving us His Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us His authority over Satan, over evil, over disease. It means that He gives us His authority to speak and to act for God — authority to be His earthly representatives.

What does it mean to be the Body of Jesus Christ? It means that we are not on our own; we are His own. We are His Body. This is why Jesus said, “Wherever you go, tell all who will listen, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” Wherever we go as His disciples we are meant to be the Body for His Holy Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the kingdom of God — as near as our own bodies — the temple of His Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us that the kingdom is where the King rules and His subjects obey. Does the kingdom of God come near to your co-workers on your job, because you bring Him near in your body? Does the kingdom of God come near your family in your home, because your body is His temple on earth? Does the kingdom of God come near your friends in your social activities, because He lives within you?

What does it mean to be the Body of Jesus Christ? It means that you see people and the world through His eyes and you feel with His heart. It means that you actually ache for the lost. It means that you hurt with the sick. Jesus said, “I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves” because as disciples we are making ourselves vulnerable to a self-centered, sin-sick world. Without the Spirit and the power of Christ these voracious wolves will devour you, Disciple! That is why Jesus is so specific in warning His disciples against falling prey to the world’s ways, such as going from house to house always seeking to get the best place to live and the best food to eat. This is why He warns them of the danger of accumulating so many things that they get bogged down. He warns them that some of the world will be closed to them and to His Spirit, but they are not to sit around crying about that; they are to move on, until they find openness, or they will fall prey to the ways of the world.

What does it mean to be the Body of Jesus Christ? It means that you don’t let the world squeeze you into its own mold, but you become the leaven of the Spirit of Jesus to a sick, lost, and hurting world.

II. What does it mean to carry on His ministry?

First of all, it means that like Jesus we must seek to minister to others instead of expecting others to minister to us. The Church is ineffective today in many places and fast losing influence because of a faulty mind-set which falls into one of two categories. The first mind-set goes like this: “As a member of this church, I’m entitled to receive ministry from the paid ministers of this church.” The second mind-set goes like this: “As a

member of this church, I have to go out and change the social inequities in this world by substituting my own idea of Christian ethics.”

Both mind-sets are wrong and doomed to failure. The first group is waiting in church or at home for the preacher whom they are paying to come and do his thing for them — to minister to them. The second group totally ignores the heart of our Lord’s third discipleship lesson as they rush out and take on the world in their own power. But sure enough, exactly what Jesus warns against happens. They are gobbled up by the wolves! Soon they are squeezed into the mold of the world, and, instead of being the leaven of the Spirit of Christ, they become nothing but an extension and spokesmen for some special political cause or social philosophy, such as gay rights or liberation theology.

As disciples of Jesus our calling is to carry on His ministry. That means we are called to minister, not just to receive ministry; we are to carry on Jesus’ three-fold ministry, not do our own thing. However, before this can happen we must get the right mind-set about both the Church and our own ministry.

III. What is the right mind-set about the Church?

The Church as the Body of Jesus Christ is meant to be many things, just as Jesus was when He was here in the flesh. But above everything else the Church’s call is to equip its members to minister for Jesus Christ — to equip its members actually to be the Body of Jesus Christ on earth and make disciples. That’s what you should hire me and the other clergy and staff members to do: not to minister to you, but rather to equip you for ministry. As a church member you have a right to expect to be equipped for ministry. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you must begin to see your church, not so much as a place where you receive ministry, but as the place where you are continually being equipped for ministry. Of course, there will be times when your wounds and hurts must be tended to in your church, because the wolves have attacked you out in the world and wounded you — but even the healing of those wounds and hurts is for the purpose of getting you on your feet and back into ministry.

As a disciple, you must begin to see that you come here each week to be filled with the power and the love of Christ so you can take His power and love out into your world. You come here to get to know Him better, so you can take more of Him with you when you go out to minister. You come here to become a living part of His body and to learn how that part of His body is supposed to function, so that, when you go near the lost, the sick and the hurting, the kingdom of God will actually come near them. That’s the mind-set a disciple has about the church, because he knows that he is called to minister, not just to receive ministry.

IV. What is the right mind-set about our own ministry?

To get our thinking straight about our own ministry, we must understand the difference between Christianity and a very cheap substitute called humanism. Christianity is bringing the power and wisdom of the living Christ to the world. Humanism is trying to change the world in our own power and knowledge. Christianity is carrying on the supernatural ministry of Jesus Christ, the living Son of God. Humanism is depending upon man's natural goodness and knowledge to change society.

Christianity is ministering through anointed preaching, teaching, and healing in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of His Holy Spirit. Humanism is man's preaching, teaching, and healing in the name of social justice and in the power of man's knowledge and goodness.

Many ministries being carried on by the Church today are not Christian ministries at all. They are nothing but humanism; that's why they are so impotent and ineffective. As disciples we are called to carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ. We are to consecrate our bodies as temples of His Holy Spirit, then take His supernatural power and transforming love to the lost, the sick, and the hurting. This is why everything we do in ministry must be done in the name of Jesus and in the power of His Spirit living in us. Every social change which we may consider desirable is not necessarily Christian ministry as some seem to think. Every move to change the ethics and actions of businesses and institutions is not necessarily Christian ministry. Every good deed and act of service is not necessarily Christian ministry. In fact, the easiest way for the devil to neutralize a Christian disciple is to confuse him about his calling and his own ministry.

Christian ministry is one thing and one thing only: it is carrying on the ministry of Jesus Christ in His name and in His power, through both speaking and acting, both telling others and showing others. Christian ministry is anointed preaching, teaching, and healing — proclaiming God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, explaining God's Word with the divine wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and applying God's Word with God's love and the gifts of His Holy Spirit. Christian ministry is not a human ministry at all; it is a supernatural ministry through human beings. It has to be, for only God's supernatural ministry can change human lives. We human beings may be able to change political systems, institutions, social laws, and even governments; but only God can change and transform human lives. Only when persons transformed by His divine love become the heart and mind of governments and institutions, will we find social justice and good will among men. Otherwise all we can hope for in this world is a continual swapping of places between the oppressors and the oppressed. That's not ministry for Christ but for the devil. That's not a worthy calling for anyone.

As disciples we have the highest possible calling: to be an extension of the supernatural body of Jesus Christ, an earthly temple for His Holy Spirit, an instrument for His supernatural, transforming power and love to a sick,

lost, and hurting world! That's your high calling as a disciple. Don't get side-tracked by a cheap substitute like humanism. Keep the right mindset about the Church and your own ministry. Imprint indelibly upon your mind that the Church was created to equip you to serve Christ. Then write permanently upon your heart this truth: you are not called to bring in the kingdom through your own knowledge and efforts. You are called to take the kingdom that is already within you near to those who are lost, sick, and hurting; then to let the living Christ minister to them through you! This is our Lord's third discipleship lesson to all of us who would be His disciples.

Discipleship Lesson #3

**As disciples we are called to be the Body of Jesus Christ,
and to carry on His ministry.**

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Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #3?
2. What four questions does this sermon address?
3. To whom does Jesus give authority? For what purpose does He give it? Describe this authority.
4. Describe Jesus' three-fold ministry, and define your terms. Which of the three are effectively ministered in your own local church? In which areas of ministry are you personally most effective?
5. Explain the term the Body of Christ. Does this describe your local church? Explain your answer. Ask yourself the question, "Who am I in the Body of Christ?"
6. What is the primary work of the clergy? How is this lived out in your local church?
7. What is the difference between Christianity and humanism? What traces of humanism do you see in your own denomination?

Search the Scriptures

8. What are Jesus' final instructions to His disciples?
(See Mt 28:19-20a; Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8b.)

What do these instructions mean to you as a modern-day disciple?
9. Who or what is the source of the disciples' power?
(See Mt 28:20b; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8a; Phil 4:13; 2 Cor 12:9.)
10. Read Matthew 4:23-5:1-2. We see what must have been a familiar scene as Jesus turns from His ministry of healing the sick to that of teaching His disciples. If you were in this picture, who would you be? Would you be one of the crowd seeking healing, preaching, or possibly excitement, intellectual stimulation, or entertainment? Or would you be one He had called as a disciple to learn from Him in order to carry on His ministry?
11. If you have experienced a personal call from Jesus Christ to follow Him as a disciple, how would you describe or explain it to a friend?
12. Read Matthew 11:28-30. To the Jew in Jesus' day, "take my yoke" meant "become my disciple". What promise does Jesus make to you, as His disciple, in this passage?

Internalize God's Word

13. The Prophet Isaiah tells about his call to discipleship in Isaiah 6:1-8. Use this passage as a basis for prayer, using the suggestions in Steps for Praying God's Word in the Appendix. (Other possibilities: Moses — Ex 3:1-14; Peter & Andrew, James & John — Mt 4:18-22 and Lk 5:1-11; Levi — Mt 9:9.)
14. Write a letter to Jesus, giving Him your honest response to His call to discipleship.

Memory scripture: John 15:16.

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Sermon 4: A Disciple's Greatest Danger

In the first 16 verses of chapter 10 of Luke, we found the instructions Jesus gave His disciples as He sent them out to carry on His ministry. When we examined all of these instructions we saw that, as disciples, we are called to be the body of Jesus Christ and to carry on His ministry. Next, in verses 17-24 Luke tells us what happens when the seventy disciples return from their first mission so excited and proud that the words just tumble over each other.

"Lord," they cry out, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Lk 10:17). But Jesus comes right back at them with: *"Rejoice not in that . . . but rejoice that your names are written in heaven!"* (Lk 10:20).

Here Jesus is warning them of their greatest danger. He is nipping something in the bud before it has an opportunity to destroy their usefulness. He is waving a red flag at them and saying, "Stop and recognize your greatest danger as a disciple!" This is discipleship lesson number four.

Discipleship Lesson #4

A disciple's greatest danger is spiritual pride.

The seventy were about to fall prey to this danger. Listen to them: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us!" Jesus had to stop it before it got started or they would lose all of their usefulness to Him. It's the same with us. This is why Jesus gives us this important lesson at the beginning of our *Journey into Discipleship*. He wants us to know what spiritual pride is, what it does to us, and what we can do about it.

I. What is spiritual pride?

Spiritual pride is simply ministering to the wrong tune, to the tune of *How Great I Am* instead of *How Great Thou Art!* It is giving lip service to Jesus, but singing our own praises:

"Lord! Even the demons are subject to us, . . . oh yes, . . . in your name!"

Notice who is first — Us! Spiritual pride is getting the focus of our ministry wrong. Although as disciples all of us are called to carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ, the fact is, none of us can really minister to anyone. We can only be an instrument through whom the living Christ can minister. Christ is the minister, for He alone can know the real need of each of us. Spiritual pride is focusing upon ourselves as the minister, instead of upon Him Who ministers to all of our needs. Spiritual pride is

Scripture

Luke 10:17-24

Text

The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And Jesus said to them . . . 'Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

Luke 10:17-18a, 20

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thinking or saying: “Even the demons are subject to me. . . in your name,” instead of saying: “Why, the demons are subject to you, Lord Jesus, even through me!” That must always be the focus of the ministry of a true disciple — not what we do, even in His name, rather what He does even through us! That keeps the focus right.

The same is true when we think or speak about our church. It’s not what we are doing for Jesus as a church, not how great we are as a church, even though great things are happening here. That is falling prey to spiritual pride. Rather, it’s what our Lord Jesus is doing here, even in and through us as a church. *How Great Thou Art* Lord, to permit us to be Your body on this spot of earth!

II. What does spiritual pride do to us?

Jesus tells us that spiritual pride cuts us off from His grace. This is what He is telling us when He says, “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*” (Lk 10:18). He is reminding us that even Satan who had once been the chief of angels was cast out of heaven because in pride he had rebelled against God. Because of spiritual pride Satan was cut off from the grace of God. That’s what spiritual pride always does to us. “*So,*” says Jesus, “*don’t let the triumphs and victories you experience as my disciples go to your head, causing you to focus on yourself instead of on me, or you too will fall like lightning from heaven.*” What does spiritual pride do to us? It cuts us off from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! How? It keeps us from receiving from God in basically three ways.

Assurance

First, it means we are cut off from the assurance that we, as God’s children, have the promise of eternal life. Jesus says, “*Rejoice not in what you have done, but rejoice in what God has done for you . . . that your names are written in heaven!*” Rejoice, that by His grace, God has given you eternal life. Rejoice not in what you are able to do, but in what God has already done for you. God has redeemed us and given us eternal life in Christ Jesus. God witnesses to our spirit and gives us the assurance of this eternal life in His Holy Spirit. But when we fall prey to spiritual pride we cut ourselves off from both the grace of the redeeming love of Jesus and the witness of God’s Holy Spirit. That’s the first thing spiritual pride does to us.

Truth

The second thing it does to us is to cut us off from the revealed truth of God. Notice in verse 21 Jesus prays like this:

“I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will” (Lk 10:21 KJV).

Ours is a revealed faith, revealed through the grace of God. That’s our

heavenly Father's gracious will! As Christians we believe that God has revealed Himself and His truth to us in His Holy Word — His Word made flesh in Jesus Christ and His Word made Truth in the Bible. What Jesus is saying here is simply this: only those who willingly and humbly receive God's truth as revelation can ever really know it. The wise and the understanding can't figure it out through intellect and logic. They can receive it only when they come as babes, wholly open to God's revealed Word in Christ and in the Bible. What Jesus wants His disciples to see is that spiritual pride always cuts us off from the revealed truth of God.

This doesn't mean we don't use our knowledge and our understanding in grasping and applying this truth. In fact, it means just the opposite. Again, it depends upon the focus, whether we are focusing upon our own knowledge and understanding or upon God's Word as revealed truth. Spiritual pride causes us to focus upon what we know instead of upon God's revealed Word as truth, cutting us off from God's grace. When we focus upon God's Word as His revealed truth to us, our knowledge and understanding become the means for sorting out this truth and applying it to our lives.

Power

The third thing spiritual pride does is to cut us off from God's power. Notice verse 22 where Jesus continues:

"All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him" (Lk 10:22).

As disciples, our authority and our power is in Jesus Christ. He is our resource. He is our power station. Only when we are in right relationship with Him, can we have that power. And that right relationship is a faith relationship — that is, looking to Him as the Lord of all, as our resource, as our power supply, acknowledging Him as almighty and all-powerful! Nothing will sever us from this tremendous power quite so quickly and so surely as spiritual pride, which is looking at ourselves and singing How Great We Are. Jesus can choose to give us His authority and His power only when we are sincerely looking to Him as our power source, as our power station. Jesus expressed this truth again in the Upper Room, when He said:

"I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me!" (Jn 14:6).

Jesus is our way to eternal life. Jesus alone can assure us that we are children of God. Jesus is God's truth revealed to us. Jesus is our power for life. To follow the way, to know the truth, and to live the life we must keep our focus on Jesus. Therefore, our greatest danger as disciples is spiritual pride, because it cuts us off from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It cuts us off from His assurance, His truth, and His power!

III. What can we do about it?

How can we keep from becoming spiritually proud when Jesus ministers His power and love through us? How can we keep from singing *How Great We Are*? Thanks be to God, Jesus has shown us the way in our scripture, and that way is so clear it can be stated in just one word: praise! Only through praise can we avoid spiritual pride. Only through praise can we keep from being cut off from our source of assurance, truth, and power. Only through praise can we turn our focus from self to God. After Jesus admonishes His disciples against spiritual pride, He demonstrates for them the remedy. Verse 21 says:

“In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (Lk 10:21a).

That’s what praise is; praise is “rejoicing in the Holy Spirit!” Praise is turning our thoughts, words, and acts to God through Christ. Praise is giving credit where credit is due. Praise is focusing on our source instead of on ourselves. What happens when we praise? The Bible says that God inhabits the praises of His people (Ps 22:3 KJV). When we praise, God comes to us in the person of His Holy Spirit. Then, as Jesus demonstrates here, we can truly rejoice in the Holy Spirit, because He gives us this joy. It’s a fruit of the Spirit. That’s why genuine praise — rejoicing in the Holy Spirit — is so important in worship.

Yet, many modern-day Christians are afraid to let go and praise the Lord by rejoicing in the Holy Spirit. By the looks of some of us you would think the Bible says, “The Lord inhabits the gloom, reserve, sophistication and spiritual pride of His people!” Many of us are afraid to let go and truly praise; therefore God cannot inhabit our praises. We’re afraid to praise; therefore we have no weapon with which to battle spiritual pride. We’re afraid to praise; therefore we’re cut off from our source — the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We’re afraid to praise; therefore we fall prey to our greatest danger — spiritual pride! Yet, if we would truly let go and praise God — genuinely praise Him by rejoicing in the Holy Spirit — we would open our lives to God’s greatest gift and best blessing. Jesus concludes this section by telling us what that is. The last two verses of our scripture, verses 23 and 24 read:

“Then turning to the disciples, He said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it’” (Lk 10:23-24).

What did they see? They saw Jesus, God in the flesh. What did they hear? They heard Jesus, the revealed Word of God. What does praise do? It opens our lives to God’s best blessing — the very presence of our Lord Jesus. Praise takes us into the presence of Jesus, and only in His presence are we safe from spiritual pride. Only in His presence are we protected against our greatest danger as a disciple — spiritual pride. If you would

have this protection, begin honestly and sincerely to praise Him — begin rejoicing in the Holy Spirit — and God will inhabit your praise with His most precious gift: His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!

Blessed will be the eyes which see what you see — Our Lord Jesus coming to you to assure you. Blessed will be the ears which hear what you hear — the revealed Word of our Lord Jesus to enlighten you. Blessed are you to know what you know — the very power of our Lord Jesus to equip you to be a disciple. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it. Let him who has eyes to see — see, and him who has ears to hear — hear!

Discipleship Lesson #4

A disciple's greatest danger is spiritual pride.

NOTES

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #4?
2. Answers to 3 questions are discussed in this sermon. What are those three questions?
3. How would you define spiritual pride? (question #1)
4. Give an example of spiritual pride you have observed in yourself or in others. (Avoid identifying individuals when discussing this in your group.)

What were the consequences of this pride?

5. Spiritual pride cuts us off from the grace of God in what ways? (question #2)
6. Ask yourself the question, “Do I have a problem with spiritual pride?” If you are not sure how to answer, a good test is to ask yourself three more questions to determine whether or not you have cut yourself off from God’s Grace.
 - Do I have assurance that I am a child of God with the promise of eternal life?
 - Does God reveal to me His truths for my life?
 - Do I receive power from God to meet what life hands out?

If you detect spiritual pride in yourself, what can you do about it? (question #3)

Search the Scriptures

7. The theme of pride versus humility runs throughout the Bible, beginning with the sin of Adam and Eve who wanted to “be like God” (Gen 3:5). Based on the following scriptures, what is the biblical view of pride and humility?

Num 12:3 | Prov 16:18 | Col 3:12 | Job 22:29 | Is 57:15 | Jas 4:6 | Ps 131 | Micah 6:8 |
1 Pet 5:5, 6

8. What was Jesus’ teaching about pride and humility?

Mt 5:3, 5 | Mt 6:5, 6 | Mt 18:1-4 | Mt 23:11-12 | Lk 14:7-11 | Lk 18:9-14

9. How did Jesus demonstrate true humility?

Phil 2:6-11 | Jn 5:19, 30; 7:16; 8:29; 14:10; 17:8 | Jn 13:1- 5

Internalize God’s Word

10. Write a modern Psalm of Praise. Emphasize praise — which focuses on Who God is, rather than thanksgiving — which expresses gratitude for what God has done for you. (Like most Psalms, yours may include some of both.) God deserves your praise for Who He is, whether or not He answers your prayers or meets your particular need.

Memory scripture: Matthew 23:12

Notes

Sermon 5: The Way of Discipleship

As Jesus makes His last journey from outside Galilee to Jerusalem with His disciples, He teaches them, and all who come after them, how to be disciples. As they travel a lawyer stops them and asks the ultimate question: *“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* (Lk 10:25). Jesus answers with a question, *“What is written in the law?”* (Lk 10:26). The lawyer replies: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself”* (Lk 10:27). Jesus declares, *“You have answered right; do this and you will live”* (Lk 10:28). But the lawyer asks another question, *“And who is my neighbor?”* (Lk 10:29). It is then that Jesus tells *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*.

A man was robbed, beaten and left to die on the Jerusalem-Jericho road. A priest came by, saw him, but hurried on. A Levite did likewise. Then a Samaritan stopped, bound up the man’s wounds, took him to an inn, paid the bill, and made arrangements for him to stay until he was well, promising to return, look after him, and pay any additional charges. Jesus concludes with this command: *“Go and do likewise!”* (Lk 10:37b).

To the first followers of Jesus, Christianity was not a religion; rather, it was a way of life. They didn’t call it Christianity; they called it The Way. This was true for several generations. Jesus didn’t come to start a religion; He came to reveal The Way to live at one with God — how to live eternally even while we are mortal human beings. This is what the lawyer meant when he asked, *“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* He wasn’t just thinking about life after death; he was thinking about the God-life now. He was thinking about The Way to be at one with God, The Way to find fulfillment and completeness as we partake of God’s eternal life both now and forever! It was the lawyer’s question about eternal life that Jesus answered with *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*, showing us *The Way of Discipleship* and giving us our fifth discipleship lesson.

Discipleship Lesson #5

The way of discipleship is loving service, not piosity.

Here, Jesus is showing us the difference between Christianity as a religion and Christianity as a way of life. He is showing us how God, Who is eternal love, has provided a way to give these God-like qualities to us, His creatures, thus making us *“new creations in Christ Jesus!”* That, Jesus tells us, is what Christianity is all about. It’s about a new way of life that is eternal — a way of life that takes on the loving service of God Himself.

Scripture

Luke 10:25-37

Text

And Jesus said . . . , ‘Go and do likewise.’

Luke 10:37b

This is what it means to be a disciple. This is what it means to begin to live eternally right now.

How can this happen? How can we follow the way of discipleship and begin to live eternally right now? This, says Jesus, is the whole point of the Incarnation — of His coming to this earth, of His ministry, and of calling disciples to finish that ministry. In The Parable of the Good Samaritan He gives us the perfect model for testing ourselves as disciples — a way we can tell if we have accepted His gift of eternal life. When we accept the gift of eternal life from Jesus, our lives will demonstrate it in four ways.

I. When we accept eternal life we begin to see others through the eyes of Jesus Christ — through the very eyes of Almighty God.

Three people pass by this half-dead man on a lonely road, but they don't see the same thing. They don't see the same thing because they are not looking with the same eyes. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says:

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness” (Mt 6:22-23).

How we see life determines how we live life. Or, to put it in the context of the lawyer's question: eternal life begins with how we look at life, or it doesn't begin at all. Two people face the same tragedy in life — the loss of a loved one, the failure of a business, sickness, a divorce, or some other tragic disappointment; one sees it as the end and the other sees it as a beginning.

In the 9th chapter of John we are told about a man who was born blind. The religious people saw his blindness as the consequence of sin; Jesus saw it as an opportunity to glorify God. That's the difference between seeing with the eyes of religion and seeing with the eyes of Christ. We had the perfect illustration of this truth in our own congregation when Lex Frieden at the age of 30 was honored as Distinguished Alumni by the University of Tulsa. Twelve years ago, as an 18-year-old freshman at OSU, Lex lost the use of his arms and legs when his spine was severed in a car accident. Many saw this as the end of a promising career in electrical engineering for a brilliant young man; Lex saw it as the beginning of a new career of loving service to others. With what result? With the result that at the age of 30 he has already accomplished far more than many of us with the use of both arms and legs will ever accomplish. Why? Because how we see life determines how we live life.

Three people pass by a half-dead man on a lonely road. The two religious people, seeing him as a hindrance to their plans, go on their way. The other man, seeing through the eyes of Christ, sees an opportunity for loving service — an opportunity to live the God-life now. That's the difference. When you accept the gift of eternal life from Christ, you begin to see with

His eyes, the eyes of love, for God is eternal and God is love. They always go together.

What do you see when you look at other people — your mate, your children, your boss, your employees, your church? Do you see through religious eyes or do you see through the eyes of Christ? Do you see them as an irritant to you or as an opportunity to live the God-life — an opportunity for loving service? In Jesus, God offers us new eyes, eternal eyes. In Jesus, God makes it possible for us to begin living eternally right now by seeing life through His eyes — the eyes of Love!

II. When we accept eternal life we begin to feel with the heart of Jesus Christ — to feel with the very heart of Almighty God.

Three people see a beaten, half-dead man on a lonely road. When the priest sees him, he passes by on the other side; likewise, the Levite. But notice what Jesus tells us about the third man:

“But the Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds . . .” (Lk 10:33, 34).

The Samaritan feels with him. He is sensitive to the man’s hurts. He is aware of the man’s needs. Those who make detailed studies of human nature tell us that all of us are prisoners of our feelings, by which they mean that our feelings control us instead of us controlling our feelings. We feel bad, so we’re short and irritable. We feel good, and we want others to join us in celebrating and having fun.

What is feeling? What does it mean to feel? That’s not an easy question to answer, for all of us have physical feelings, mental feelings, spiritual feelings and a combination of all three. I’m sure that here Jesus is talking about a sensitivity of awareness. That’s the best definition I can think of for feeling. To say that we feel pain means that we are sensitively aware of pain. The feeling that a boy has for a certain girl comes from being sensitively aware of that girl. When you say that you feel close to God, you really mean that you are very sensitive to the fact that you are aware of God’s presence.

Three people look at the same half-dead man on a lonely road, but feel very differently about him. Why? Because their sensitivity of awareness differs. When the Bible says that God is aware of every hair on our heads, it’s really telling us how God feels about us. It is saying that God is very sensitive to our needs. God is aware of the smallest thing about us and sensitive to what that means.

Look at the life-style of Jesus while He walks this earth, and you see the perfect illustration of this. Even in a crowd Jesus is sensitively aware of everyone — of the blind, the lame, and the sick — of every need. A dying woman reaches out to touch His garment, needing help; no one else notices, but Jesus knows because He is sensitively aware. He knows because He

actually feels with her. That's the picture of the God-life on earth, that's what Jesus means by following Him and living eternally right now — that's *The Way of Discipleship*. It's the way of loving service, not piosity.

Often I hear someone say he has lost the feeling he once had for his mate, and immediately I know the problem is not in the mate but in the one who said it. The real trouble is that the person has lost a most precious faculty, a sensitivity of awareness — the eternal God-life.

Three people pass by a half-dead man on a lonely road. The two religious people are not sensitively aware of him, but the other man, feeling with the heart of Christ, has compassion and goes to him. The two always go together: the eternal heart of Christ and compassion, for they are the two sides of eternal life — the God-life. To accept the gift of eternal life from God means that we accept God's offer of a new heart in Christ, which makes it possible for us to be sensitively aware and to feel with others. Then we begin to live eternally while we are yet upon this earth.

III. When we accept the gift of eternal life from Jesus we begin to think with His mind — to think with the very mind of Almighty God!

Three people look at the same beaten, half-dead man on that lonely road, but they have entirely different thoughts about him. For example, the priest is afraid that this man will interfere with his one big opportunity in life. In Palestine at that time, the primary duty of the priest was to officiate in the temple, but there were so many priests, each could serve no more than two weeks each year. Consequently, many of the priests lived in Jericho and made the trip to Jerusalem only when they were on duty in the temple. In this era before vaccinations, inoculations and scientific sanitary conditions, the Jewish law was very strict about touching the dead as protection from epidemic. The law decreed that, if you touched the dead, you could not share in any religious function or congregate with others for seven days. No doubt this thought was the uppermost in the mind of the priest when he saw this beaten, half-dead man as he made his way to officiate in the temple. He was afraid it would deprive him of his one great opportunity of the year, so he hurried on to be religious. He chose religion over living God's way.

The other man, being a Levite, was the recipient of special privileges. The Levites assisted in the temple, which meant among other things that they managed the market-place there. They were the aristocracy, the people with money. Put yourself in the place of this well-to-do Levite as he travels a road notorious for bandits and robbers, hurrying to do his job in the temple. When he sees this beaten, half-dead man, fear grips his heart and fills his mind, for he is a prime target as the next victim. Both the priest and the Levite were motivated, not by love but by fear — one of the most debilitating forces in all of life. The Apostle John tells us how to cope with fear:

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 Jn 4:18).

Paul urges us:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5 KJV).

Let the eternal mind of God, Who is love, be in you, so you will be motivated not by fear but by love. In his letter to Timothy he says it like this:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7 KJV).

When Christ Jesus lives in us, we begin to think with His mind and thus begin thinking the thoughts of God — the thoughts of perfect love which cast out fear. Then we begin to live eternally while we are yet upon this earth.

IV. Finally, when we accept the gift of eternal life in Jesus we begin to act with the will of Christ — to act with the very will of Almighty God!

Three people come across the same half-dead man on a lonely road. Two pass by, but the other stops and acts. He does something. This is the real difference between this man and the other two. Jesus points us to the third man and says, *“Go and do likewise!”* That’s the God-life; that’s being a disciple; that’s living eternally while you are still mortal!

Regardless of what you see or feel or think about another person, real love is the way you act toward that person. The seeing, feeling and thinking simply prepare you to act — to love. This is what Jesus means when He says, *“Go and do likewise!”* He means for us to act. He means for us to do something, for that’s love and that’s the way of a disciple — loving service! This is what the Bible means when it says that God is love. It means that God does something for us. God acts. God gives Himself away for us, and the greatest gift of all is the gift to us of His only Son that we might not perish but have eternal life!

This is why God sent His Holy Spirit to us when Jesus ascended. God was acting, God was doing something so we could see with His eyes, feel with His heart, think with His mind, and act with His will. This is possible only when we permit God to pour His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which He gives us. When this happens we actually begin to live eternally while we are yet upon this earth — we truly begin to follow Jesus as disciples.

The best news of all is this: if we permit this eternal life to begin now it will never end, for death is simply an entrance into a greater and more meaningful life of loving service with our eternal God. The Bible says that everything else will pass away — all of our religious acts, experiences, and good works will pass away, but this love will never end. Love will never end because God is eternal, and God is love. Those two truths go together and cannot be separated. This is the gospel — that God sent Jesus Christ,

His only Son, to us so these truths can come together in our lives now through Him. It's in The Parable of the Good Samaritan that Jesus shows us the way to bring them together in our own lives as He gives us our discipleship lesson.

Discipleship Lesson #5

The way of discipleship is loving service, not piosity.

Eternity and Love come together in us when we begin to see with the eyes of Christ, feel with the heart of Christ, think with the mind of Christ, and act with the will of Christ. That's eternal life and that's God's gift to us as heirs of Christ. That's *The Way of Discipleship* — the way of loving service, not piosity. *"Go and do likewise!"*

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #5?
2. How would you define eternal life?
3. According to The Parable of the Good Samaritan, if we have accepted eternal life, our lives will demonstrate it in four ways. Describe those four ways in your own words:
4. Identify a particular person you know who has a need.

How do you see him? What is your feeling toward him? What do you think about him and his situation? What have you done about him?

Do your answers demonstrate eternal values or temporal ones?

What changes, if any, would you like to make in your response to this person's need?

What has God done to make it possible for you to change?

Search the Scriptures

5. What do we learn about relating to others from Jesus' example? (Jn 13:1-15)
6. Read Mark 7:1-8 and Matthew 23. Describe and explain Jesus' attitude toward the religious leaders of His day.

Internalize God's Word

7. Use The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:29-37 as a basis for Praying God's Word. Ask God to show you which person you are in this story — priest, Levite, or Samaritan. See the Appendix, Steps in Praying God's Word.

Memory scripture: Luke 10:27

Notes

Sermon 6: God's Rhythm for Your Life

Lloyd C. Douglas, who is best known for his novel *The Robe* tells about a friend who taught violin in a small room surrounded by other small studios where music teachers taught piano, voice and other instruments. One day when Mr. Douglas dropped by the studio to chat, his old friend looked haggard and drawn. To cheer him up Mr. Douglas forced a smile and enthusiastically asked, "Tell me, my friend, what's the good news today?"

The old violin teacher pondered the question a moment. Then a slight smile crept across his lips as he picked up a small wooden hammer, walked across the room, briskly struck a tuning fork, then enthusiastically said, "That's the good news today; for that, my friend, is 'A', and that is something you can depend upon. The piano next door may be out of tune, and the soprano across the hall may sing off-key; but no matter, that's still 'A'. It was 'A' yesterday; it will be 'A' tomorrow and a thousand years from now. That's something you can depend on, and that, my friend, is the good news today!"

In a sense, Jesus is saying a very similar thing to us in the familiar passage of scripture found in the last paragraph of chapter 10 of Luke. Jesus is a guest in the home of His friends in Bethany. Mary is sitting at His feet listening to His teaching, while Martha is busy preparing the meal. Martha becomes irritated because Mary refuses to help her with the serving, so she goes to Jesus and complains, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to do all of the work. Tell her to help me!" Jesus answers her,

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:41-42).

In a sense, Jesus is saying, "Martha, you are irritated and troubled, not because of this one little conflict with your sister over house work, but because you are out of tune with life itself. The good news is, there is one thing you can depend on to get your life back in tune and operating according to God's rhythm; that's what Mary has chosen to do."

In this short, seemingly inconsequential domestic quarrel, Jesus is giving us one of the most profound insights in the Bible, for here He is showing us the real problem with sin and God's answer for sin. Jesus is showing us that sin is not just a sour note now and then in an otherwise good life; sin distorts every note we play in life because we are not in tune with God and His creation. Just as there are dozens of characteristics inherent in different parts of a violin — the wood, the glue, and the strings — which get it out of tune, so sin is inherent in us, permeating all parts of our being and keeping us from being in tune with God and His creation.

Scripture

Luke 10:38-42

Text

But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:41-42

The good news is that God sent Jesus Christ into the midst of all this discord as the perfect tuning fork for our lives. That's why "Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her!" She chose to get her life attuned to God's creation before attempting to serve her Lord; no lesson could be more important for a would-be disciple.

In our last discipleship lesson we saw that the way of discipleship is loving service, not piosity. The trouble is, because of sin we don't have the love it takes to serve in that way, as demonstrated by Martha. Only Jesus, the Son of God Who has overcome sin, has that kind of love! Without Jesus our lives will always be discordant, no matter how hard we try to do good works for Him or the Church. Therefore, Jesus gives us this discipleship lesson:

Discipleship Lesson #6

**As disciples we must attune our lives to the rhythm of God's creation by receiving Christ's healing love, then giving that love to others:
receive-give! receive-give!**

Martha, in trying to give without receiving from Jesus, is wearing herself out. In The Parable of the Good Samaritan we saw that the priest and the Levite, in trying to receive without giving, became ingrown and useless to the Lord. Jesus is giving us graphic illustrations of the two deadly diseases that have plagued Christians and the Church all across the ages. They are still the two most deadly sicknesses we must guard against today. The first sickness is the deadly disease of ingrownness. That was the disease of the priest and the Levite, but soon that deadly disease struck the Church of Jesus Christ, too. Come with me as we race quickly across the centuries and you will see what I mean.

I. The Disease of Ingrownness

Jesus saw it in His own disciples as He stood with three of them on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. It was the most moving, exciting experience in the lives of these three, Peter, James and John. For a few moments they were suspended between heaven and earth. Many of us have had a similar, once-in-a-life-time, spiritual experience — a time when we stand in the very presence of God Himself and know that we know that we know; a time when the whole world around us is transfigured into beauty, loveliness and truth; a time when Jesus as the Son of God becomes real for us. This is what happened to these three disciples that day on the Mount of Transfiguration. Naturally, they didn't want to lose that spiritual high so they exclaimed, "Lord, let's just stay here. Let's build our tabernacle here — away from all the problems down there in the valley. This is really living, Lord; let's just stay here forever!" Jesus immediately saw their sickness: they had been stricken with ingrownness. So, He led them down the mountainside into the valley below where He healed the epileptic boy that the other nine disciples had been unable to heal.

This is simply the first instance of this deadly sickness. We see it breaking out again and again during the next 19 centuries. Immediately after the Resurrection, the Church was stricken with this deadly disease and God had to raise up another “man of the hour” to restore it. While the administrative board sat in Jerusalem and bickered about its local building program and Church law, Saul of Tarsus — the man we know as Paul — tramped the dusty roads and sailed the turbulent seas, bringing the healing love of Jesus Christ to bear upon a sin-sick world. As a consequence, the Church spread throughout the known world, even becoming officially recognized by the Holy Roman Emperor.

However, that health didn't last long; at the end of the fifth century the enemy struck the Church again with this deadly disease. No one can tell me that there is not a devil, for none but a satanic mind could conceive such a disease as this. This disease of self-satisfaction, of ingrownness, didn't kill the Church. In fact, the sicker it got, the fatter and bigger it grew. The sicker it got, the healthier it looked. What the disease did was to sap all of the Church's strength and power so it could not do the job Christ created His Church to do — to take His healing love to a sin-sick world. It used all of its strength just to keep itself alive. No wonder the next thousand year period is called the Dark Ages!

It wasn't until the early part of the 16th century that an expert was raised up by God to diagnose what was wrong. Martin Luther diagnosed the same old disease of ingrownness and prescribed the same divine cure that Jesus prescribed: take the gospel to the people. The good news is more than ritual and a priesthood of a selected few; it is a whole way of life and a priesthood of all believers. It is being disciples and bringing God's healing love in Christ to a sin-sick world!

For the next two centuries this cure was like a miracle drug. But then the persistent virus struck again when the Church grew fat and soft. This time, God raised up a most unusual man to do His work, a small, erudite, impatient, methodical man named John Wesley. You know the story of John Wesley and the Methodist movement. It is the same old story of taking the healing love of Jesus Christ out to a sin-sick world, of showing a self-satisfied Church and a snobbish world that the gospel and the needs of people were meant for each other. Now, another two centuries have come and gone, and where are we?

When we're honest we have to admit that the Church is about as sick as the Church can be, but this time with an entirely new disease — our second deadly disease — the “Martha Disorder.” Just when we began to rejoice because we had found the answer to ingrownness, the enemy struck with this second deadly disease, as in our physical world, when we found the answer for polio, cancer began to run rampant.

II. The Disease of Humanism

This second deadly disease first appeared on the scene around the turn of the century. It appeared as a wolf in sheep's clothing, for it appeared first as the proper medicine for the disease of ingrownness. But it wasn't really isolated and recognized as the disease it really is until the 1930s. It reached the epidemic stage in the 1960s and began to cause wholesale death throughout the Church in the 1970s. Now we can recognize this disease for what it is. It is the deadly disease of humanism or do-goodism, the disease of Martha.

Its symptoms are familiar to all of us; during the past two generations we've all been stricken with it at times. Perhaps it is characterized best by the symptom of busyness, like Martha. The most important thing is to be busy — make pronouncements, organize task forces, get busy doing something. Exactly what you're doing is really not the important thing, as long as you're keeping busy. The important thing is to find a social cause, and get busy changing the oppressors into the oppressed and the oppressed into the oppressors with total disregard for the real enemy, which is sin — that inherent discord which keeps us from being in tune with God and His creation.

The deadliness of humanism is that it substitutes man's power for God's power. Like Martha it gets busy doing its own thing, totally ignoring Jesus. It sends us out into our world to do our own job, in our own power, instead of equipping us as disciples for Jesus Christ to take His healing love out to a sin-sick world. The sickness we are experiencing in the Church today is simply the toll of the epidemic of humanism that swept across the Church in the '60s and decimated local churches almost everywhere in the '70s. In an effort to stamp out the disease of ingrownness we subjected the Body of Christ to attack by a new strain of virus that is even more deadly than the first. You see, this new disease of humanism is really the deadly disease of spiritual anemia — pernicious spiritual anemia. Because of this deadly disease our "spiritual blood" cannot be recreated and we grow tired and disillusioned. Finally we wear out and die as Christians, for that which puts the power into our spiritual blood has no place in humanism. For example:

- The Bible has no power for a humanist, because it is simply a man-made book with all of the weaknesses of man, instead of the all-powerful Word of God which is sharper than a two-edged sword.
- Jesus, the living Christ, offers a humanist no power; He is simply the human example of what we should try to be in our own effort, instead of our only Redeemer from sin and our Power for life.
- Likewise, the Holy Spirit is simply a theological expression, instead of our Divine Interpreter for truth and Enabler for life.

- Prayer is a cop-out, instead of the opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus to receive His love and His Spirit, so we will have the miracle medicine a sin-sick world needs.
- Worship is simply a human celebration instead of an opportunity for God's people to receive from God.

In short, humanism is the vain effort to substitute the works of man for the divine and supernatural power of God in Christ. Humanists see themselves and their works, not Christ, as the Savior of the world. Trying to meet the needs of the world through humanism is like trying to cure cancer with a band-aid! But the good news is, there is a divine cure — a miracle drug — for both ingrownness and humanism, and Jesus gives us this answer in discipleship lesson number six.

Discipleship Lesson #6

**As disciples we must attune our lives to the rhythm of God's creation by receiving Christ's healing love, then giving that healing love to others:
receive-give! receive-give!**

That's the rhythm: receive-give! receive-give! Once you recognize this truth, you see it in many things that Jesus said and did. This is what He is really saying to Nicodemus, when He declares, "... unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

That is, "Nicodemus, you must first receive my Spirit, before you can do my work!" This is the truth Jesus is revealing to us in the Parables of New Patches on Old Garments, and New Wine in Old Wineskins. The Christian's way is not to go around trying to patch up a sin-sick world with a few good works now and then. Rather it is first receiving the Spirit and love of Christ Himself as an entirely new way of life, and then taking that out to a hurting and dying world.

That's also our Lord's message to us in the twin miracles of the Transfiguration, where the three disciples wanted to stay on the mountain top in religious ecstasy, and the healing of the epileptic boy down in the valley after the other nine disciples had failed. Remember what Jesus says, when the disciples ask Him why they failed:

"This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting"
(Mk 9:29).

Why did Jesus leave the Mount of Transfiguration and go down into the valley? Filled with the Spirit of God He went there to give away what He had received: God's healing love. There's the rhythm of God's creation: Receive divine love from Christ, then give that love to others. Receive-give! Receive-give! It's as natural for a Christian as breathing is for a natural man. In fact, it is "spiritual breathing": receive from God — give to people. Inhale — exhale! Receive — give! Inhale — exhale! Receive — give!

NOTES

Even before Jesus created His Church, the Son of God knew how the enemy would try to kill the Church. Even at the beginning Jesus saw the symptoms of these two deadly diseases in His own apostles. He saw the symptoms of humanism in His good friend, Martha, who was anxious and troubled about many things, because she had not sat at the feet of Jesus. He saw the symptoms of ingrownness in the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, who wanted to build a church on the mountain and shut out the problems and pains of a hurting, sin-sick world. He saw the symptoms of humanism in the nine disciples at the foot of the mountain, who were trying to heal in their own power without first being in the presence of Jesus. He saw the symptoms of ingrownness in the institutional churchman, Nicodemus, who had the form but neglected the grace and power of God. He saw the symptoms of both ingrownness and humanism in Jews all around Him, who were constantly trying to sew religious and moralistic patches onto the fabric of a sin-rottened world.

To all Jesus said the same thing, and He says the same thing to all of us today, whether our sickness be ingrownness or humanism. He says, "You can serve Me only when there is a divine rhythm in your life. And the good news is, I have come to be your eternal tuning fork. You can depend upon Me for 'I am the same, yesterday, today and forever!'"

What's the good news today, my friends? Why, the good news is that Jesus has come so that we, His disciples, can attune our lives to the rhythm of God's creation: receive from Christ — give to the world the healing love it needs — receive — give, receive — give! This is God's miracle medicine for a sin-sick world. So, join with me now in tuning our lives to God's Rhythm for Life as first we open our lives to receive this miraculous love from God; then, we go from here determined to give what we receive from God to others as the healing power of Jesus Christ on earth: receive from Christ give to others! Receive — give! Receive — give! That's the sixth lesson for all who would-be His disciples!

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #6?
2. What are the two deadly spiritual diseases discussed in this sermon? Define each one in your own words.
3. Have you ever had symptoms of either disease, or have you observed them in others or in your church? Describe or Explain.

Search the Scriptures

4. Read the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:31-46. What was Jesus teaching about the disease of Ingrownness in this parable?
5. Read the following scriptures and explain what each has to say about the man-centered disease of humanism — “Martha’s Disease.”

Jn 14:13 | Acts 2:38-39 | 2 Cor 12:9, 10

According to these scriptures, what is God’s cure for humanism or “do-goodism”?

Internalize God’s Word

6. Ask God to show which disease is most likely to be a threat to your own spiritual health — Ingrownness (receiving without giving) or Humanism (giving without receiving). Then take the appropriate “prescription”:

For Ingrownness: Rewrite (Paraphrase) Isaiah 1:11-17, substituting your religious practices for those named in the scripture, and current opportunities for service for verse 17.

For Humanism: Read Luke 10:38-42. Let God show you ways you have been like Martha. Listen. Wait. Let Him show you changes He wants to make in you.

7. Read Matthew 17:1-20. Pray God’s Word using the steps outlined in the Appendix.

Memory scripture: Acts 1:8

Notes

Sermon 7: “Lord, Teach Us to Pray”

As Jesus makes the journey from outside Galilee to Jerusalem for the last time with His disciples, Luke tells us this:

[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray . . .” (Lk 11:1).

In answering this request Jesus not only gives us The Lord’s Prayer, He also gives us the seventh lesson in our *Journey Into Discipleship*.

Discipleship Lesson #7

To be disciples we must share in the prayer life of Jesus and make prayer a way of life.

In our last lesson Jesus told His disciples how to tune their lives to the rhythm of God’s creation by first receiving from God and then giving to others. Now in lesson number seven, He goes a step further and tells us that the way to receive from God is through prayer. Not only that, He also tells us specifically *how* as He shows us five essential characteristics of the kind of prayer through which we receive from God.

I. To receive from God through prayer we must get the right concept of God.

“When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be thy name” (Lk 11:2).

Prayer will be meaningless until you get the right concept of God. About the time that America was discovered, there lived in Poland a man called Copernicus. He was a one-man revolution in the field of scientific thought. Everybody believed then that the earth was flat, that it stood still, that it was the center around which everything else revolved. But Copernicus challenged that, and taught the world to think a new thought — that the earth was not the center but a humble member of a vaster system moving in a marvelously integrated universe. Thus was born the idea back of all modern scientific advancement — the oneness, the unbelievable unity of all creation. It is odd that the Church should have opposed the ideas of Copernicus, because what he did in science the Bible had been proclaiming for centuries:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one LORD” (Deut 6:4).

He is the King, the Creator and Ruler of all things; He is all-powerful; He is almighty. Everything moves and has its being in Him. Both science and religion witness to the unity of all creation — to the oneness of God and His creation. It is as though religion, through long darkness, had been groping toward a door; and science, through the same darkness, had been groping

Scripture

Luke 11:1-4

Text

And [Jesus] said to them, “Thy kingdom come...

Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.”

Luke 11:2-4

toward a door; and lo, when the door was opened it was the same door and the same vision — the unity of all creation, and its Creator, One God — one creation! This is what it really means to hallow God's name. It means recognizing God as Creator and Ruler of all things and putting Him on the throne of all life. It means recognizing and obeying Him as Sovereign. It means tuning our lives to His creation, instead of trying to twist Him to fit ours. Hallowing God's name in prayer means opening our lives to the source of all life and the power which sustains all life. At the same time it means recognizing this almighty God as our own heavenly Father, with limitless love and mercy for us. Jesus reveals to us that God is all-powerful yet all-merciful, almighty yet all-loving, the Creator and Ruler with the heart of a Father. This, says Jesus, is where prayer must always begin: with the right concept of God — the all-powerful, almighty God Who is our heavenly Father. When it begins there, the second step naturally follows.

II. To receive from God through prayer, we must take out citizenship in God's kingdom and become a loyal citizen of that kingdom.

"When you pray, say: . . . 'Thy kingdom come'" (Lk 11:2).

In other words, it is a natural and logical step after hallowing God's name to submit yourself to His rule. After acknowledging and proclaiming the unity of all creation and its Creator — one God, one creation — the only wise thing to do is to become a loyal citizen of that kingdom, to stop rebelling and submit to the sovereignty of God. Surely all of us can see that it's dishonest and disloyal to pray for God's kingdom to come upon earth without first making God the king of our own lives. It's like a husband or wife praying for a good marriage, but continuing to practice infidelity. It's ridiculous, it's dishonest, it's disloyal. It doesn't make sense.

If we would be disciples and get our lives in tune with all of creation and its Creator, we must begin by becoming loyal citizens of God's kingdom. How do we do this? Jesus is explicit. He says the only way we can do it is by living a life of stewardship. We do it, He says, by committing ourselves — our time, our talents, and our possessions — to the work of God's kingdom. How foolish to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth and then withhold the very gifts which will further His kingdom on earth. If you would begin experiencing the power and wonders of prayer, you must first begin by bringing your life into alignment with the source of this power by living a life of stewardship. The point is: prayer is not only what we say with our lips; it is also what we do with our lives. Before we can begin to receive the blessings of God, we must begin praying with our lives: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," by living a life of stewardship!

III. To receive from God through prayer, we must learn to live in the present moment — not yesterday, not tomorrow, but today, for today is all we have.

"This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps 118:24).

If we are to know God personally and receive from Him in prayer, it must be in this present moment, because yesterday has already gone and tomorrow is not yet here. The present moment is all we have. Prayer is not looking back nor looking forward, but genuine prayer is being in God's presence right now. Jesus says it like this:

"When you pray, say: . . . 'Give us each day our daily bread'" (Lk 11:3).

This was one of the hardest lessons that the Children of Israel had to learn when they wandered in the wilderness, being molded into God's people. It's still one of the hardest lessons for modern day Christians to learn too, as we are being molded into disciples for Jesus Christ. As the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness day after day with meager rations, they began to remember the ample food supply back in Egypt, and the remembering led them to murmur and complain about their lot and to criticize Moses, their leader. As always, their critical spirit turned to a spirit of fear as their thoughts transported them into the future and they envisioned starvation. Moses tried to reason with them and told them in effect: "God can help you only when you trust Him, and you can trust Him only when you learn to live one day at a time. God can help you only when you learn to live in His presence. But it's impossible to live in His presence if you continually transport yourself into the past through your guilt, bitterness, and resentments and into the future through your fears and anxiety. Can't you see? That makes you miss the very thing you need and want most: the blessings of God in the present moment."

Because the Children of Israel didn't listen, God used one of the greatest object lessons in the Bible to teach them, and to teach all mankind, one of the most important truths in life: God can bless us only when we learn to live in the present moment. God promised the Children of Israel meat in the evening and bread in the morning. Sure enough, the quails came at the close of day, and manna fell in the morning like frost. There was only one condition: no one could gather more than enough for a man and his family for one day. Predictably, those who thought they knew more than God collected enough for several days. They thought their security was in the manna, not in God. But the next day their manna had a foul odor and was full of worms. It was useless.

Jesus is saying the same thing to us here. He is telling us that to receive from God through prayer, we must learn, like the Children of Israel, to gather our blessings fresh every morning. That's what it means to share in the prayer life of Jesus and to make prayer a daily way of life. We must learn to live in the present moment and stop transporting ourselves from

past to future — skipping all of the blessings of the present moment. Prayer is not looking back, nor is it looking forward; prayer is experiencing the very presence of God right now. It's making the presence of God a daily way of life.

IV. To receive from God through prayer, we must pray in an atmosphere of forgiveness.

“When you pray, say: . . . and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us” (Lk 11:4).

Notice that in both versions of *The Lord's Prayer* after Jesus says, “Give us each day our daily bread,” He doesn't stop, but simply puts a comma, takes a breath, and goes on with “and forgive us — as we forgive others.” In other words, “Each day,” He says, “we must both seek forgiveness and give forgiveness,” as a daily practice. We must not let a single day go by without both receiving forgiveness for ourselves and giving our forgiveness to others. This, says Jesus, is the only atmosphere where true prayer is possible. If we have not been forgiven, then our relationship with God is broken. If we have not forgiven others, then our relationship with others is broken; and prayer is basically relationship. Prayer is first relationship with God, and second, it is offering ourselves as a means for God's relationship with others through us. If you go to the altar to pray, says Jesus, and remember that anyone has anything against you, or you have anything against anyone, you are wasting your time until you go and make things right through forgiveness. Genuine prayer is possible only in an atmosphere of forgiveness.

The opposite of forgiveness is what Paul calls *bondage* — bondage to our own sin by guilt, bondage to the sins of others by bitterness and resentments. God can't empower us or use us when we are in bondage. But the good news is, God has provided a way in Christ to release us from this bondage so we can be disciples and live life according to the rhythm of God's creation: receive from God — give to others — and that way is forgiveness.

Have you ever really accepted the forgiveness God is offering you in the death of Christ on the Cross? Do you accept it fresh every morning? If not, you can accept it right now by acknowledging Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and your Victor over sin. Have you ever accepted the redeeming, forgiving love of Jesus which He offers you in the gift of His Holy Spirit, so you can truly forgive those who have sinned against you? Do you accept it fresh every morning? If not then, your own love will turn foul like spoiled manna and be useless. The Bible says Christ wants to pour His forgiving love into our hearts so we can be both forgiven and forgiving.

The only way we can create an atmosphere of forgiveness so we can truly pray and receive from God is by accepting God's greatest gift to us — the

gift of Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. Have you ever really accepted this gift? Do you accept it fresh every morning? If you do, then there can be no guilt in your heart now, for your Savior will have released you from this bondage. If you do there can be no bitterness and resentment in your heart now, for your living Lord will have taken that burden from you. Then when you pray, you will pray in an atmosphere of forgiveness where God is present and miracles happen.

V. Finally, to receive from God through prayer, we must be led by Christ, not by human temptation.

“When you pray say . . . lead us not into temptation” (Lk 11:4b).

It was never intended that we should try to live life in our own strength. When Christ called His disciples to carry on His ministry, He didn’t leave them to their own resources; He promised them a superhuman, supernatural strength. He tells us in plain, simple, straight-forward language that we will never be left desolate, but that He will always be with us. Still the number one temptation in life is to forget this truth and fall back into the hopeless condition of self-sufficiency. Every day each one of us is tempted to think that we must go it alone, that we must do it all ourselves, that the whole weight of the world is solely upon our own shoulders. We do it as we try to be good parents, carry out our daily work, care for our sick, bury our dead, teach Sunday school, prepare sermons — in everything we do. But Jesus says we can be led away from this temptation. Paul tells us in the Bible:

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Cor 10:13).

The way God has provided for us to escape this common temptation is through the living Spirit of Jesus Christ Who has already defeated all human temptations. To be born again simply means to be led by the Spirit of Jesus — to be led by the Holy Spirit instead of being led by the flesh, our humanness. Here is the real secret to sharing in the prayer life of Jesus and making prayer a daily way of life. When we pray we must not let our own human thoughts, feelings, decisions, and actions be our guide; prayer is our one great opportunity to give the Spirit of Jesus Christ dominion over our mind, heart, soul, and body — over our thoughts, feelings, decisions, and actions. Prayer is our great opportunity to truly share in the Spirit of Jesus and make His way our way of life. This is our discipleship lesson.

The reason many of us do not have an exciting, meaningful prayer life is simply because we fall prey to this temptation to let the world set the agenda of our prayer life, instead of being led by the Spirit of Jesus. We think the world’s thoughts, instead of having the mind of Christ. We feel with the world’s heart, instead of the heart of Christ. We make decisions

according to the world's standards instead of according to God's Holy Word in Christ. We do what the world does instead of what Christ would have us do. Many of us are under the dominion of the world instead of under the dominion of the Spirit of Christ, because we've never learned this very important discipleship lesson.

Discipleship Lesson #7

To be disciples we must share in the prayer life of Jesus and make prayer a way of life.

Like the disciples of old we continue to cry out today, "Lord, teach us how to pray!" Christ is patiently waiting to bless us when we take seriously what He has already taught us about prayer in *The Lord's Prayer*, for He can bless us only when we actually begin to share in His prayer life and make His prayer our way of life as we pray like this:

*Father, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread;
And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us;
And lead us not into temptation (Lk 11:2-4).*

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #7?
2. What five things must we do in order to receive from God through prayer.?

Search the Scriptures

3. Jacob's dream (Gen 28:10-17) was an experience of God — a prayer experience. Based on this passage how would you describe Jacob's concept of God?

How would you describe your own concept of God?
4. What is required of you as a steward of God's grace? (See Luke 12:42-48, I Cor 4:1-2, Titus 1:7-9, 1 Pet 4:10-11.)
5. What does each of the following scriptures say about living in the present moment?

Ps 118:24

Lam 3:23
6. How do you reconcile the free gift in Eph 2:8 with the requirement in Mt 6:14-15?
7. After preaching the gospel in the power of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter told his hearers how to receive the Holy Spirit. What did he tell them to do? Acts 2:38

Internalize God's Word

8. Using Psalm 77 as a pattern, write your own Prayer-Psalm. Notice the Psalmist's honesty (vs 1-10), then how he set his mind on God's faithfulness in the past (vs 11-20).

Memory scripture: Matthew 6:14-15

Notes

Sermon 8: The Power in Prayer

As we travel the road into discipleship with Jesus, we come to one of the most important crossroads on that road. If you miss the directions of our Lord at this juncture, you will take the wrong road and miss the rest of the journey altogether. Last week in lesson number seven, Jesus taught His disciples how to pray by giving us *The Lord's Prayer*. Now, He takes the next logical step and answers our question: "What can we expect when we pray?" by giving us this lesson:

Discipleship Lesson #8

The power in prayer is receiving God's Holy Spirit.

Jesus doesn't bluntly state this lesson as I just did. Rather, in His inimitable way, He first draws two vivid pictures showing exactly what He means and then concludes with lesson number eight. Let's examine these two pictures so we can see what He means and as disciples, begin to experience this power in prayer. In the first picture, Jesus depicts the difference between God and a human friend when He says,

"Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him;' and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs" (Lk 11:5-8).

In other words, Jesus says that when we need something from a human friend we must go to him at his place and ask for it, and often we must even plead and beg for it. If our insistence is strong enough and long enough, we will probably get it. But, Jesus concludes this first picture by showing us that this is not the way it is with God. He says,

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Lk 11:9).

Why is this so? Because God is different from a human friend, that's why. God doesn't live in a separate place with the door closed to us, shut off from us. No, the good news is, God is with us. This is the meaning of the foundation stone upon which our faith is built—the Incarnation. This is why, when Jesus was born they called Him "Emmanuel" — God with us. This is the meaning of Pentecost. Even though Jesus had to leave this world physically, He will never leave us spiritually. Like the wind, He is all around

Scripture

Luke 11:5-13

Text

"And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you . . . If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Luke 11:9 & 13

us. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of God with us. This is the meaning of prayer. Prayer is not pleading and begging a separated and reluctant God to come to us; prayer is opening our lives to our God Who is with us now — Who is always present with us.

I. The Closed World View

The point that Jesus wants us to see in this first picture is the fallacy of our own world view. He wants us to see that the primary reason prayer has been ineffective for many of us is because we have the wrong view of God, of ourselves, and of the world in which we live. Here Jesus is making it perfectly clear that we don't live in one world and God in another, so that we have to plead with God to come into our world and give us gifts now and then. No, that's totally the wrong view of God and of our world. That's viewing God as a human friend who is limited to one place, who resides in a separate place, and whom we must beg to share his blessings with us. The Christian view is: God is with us; the kingdom of God is here now; the kingdom of God is among us; the kingdom of God is within us, for we are created in the image of God!

Prayer, says Jesus, can have meaning and power only when we grasp this first truth: God is with us, not separated from us in another world. For too long now man has closed God out of his world by his closed world view. For too long now man has thought of himself as living in a physical world called earth, while both God and Satan are somewhere out there, invading our world now and then with either good or evil. Jesus came to show us that this is the wrong view of our world, and it is because of this wrong world view that we do not experience power in prayer. Jesus came to reveal to us that God is Spirit, and so is Satan. As human beings created in the image of God we not only live in a physical world, we also live in the spiritual worlds of both the Holy Spirit of God and the evil spirits of Satan.

Being created in the image of God means that we are not only physical beings, we are also spiritual beings, which means we can both be blessed by the Holy Spirit of God or cursed by the evil spirit of Satan — depending upon whether we open our lives to God's Holy Spirit or Satan's evil spirits. At the heart of the gospel is the fact that Jesus came to this earth to be our Victor over these evil spirits, so they can no longer make our lives miserable and destroy us. Jesus came to reveal how we can open our lives to the blessings of God's Holy Spirit and receive the life-giving, healing power we need now. That is the real power in prayer.

The Bible says that by accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are saved from daily domination and control by these evil spirits. The Bible also says that by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord we are saved for an abundant and eternal life both now and forever. The way we receive both of these blessings is through prayer; but before prayer can do this for us, we must get the right view of the world in which we live. First we must discard,

once and for all, the idea that God is like a reluctant friend living in another place, who will leave his cozy place and come to us and bless us if we just plead and beg long enough. Can't you see what such a world view does to our Christian faith? Why, it negates everything Jesus came to do and to reveal to us:

- It separates man and God instead of reconciling us.
- It makes prayer a form of begging an outside God to come into our world, instead of being the means by which we become at-one with Him.
- It makes eternal life a future, other worldly experience, instead of the life-giving, healing power of God now.
- It makes evil, disease, and death the natural way for man in our physical world, instead of the enemy the Bible says they are.
- It takes all the life-giving, healing power out of worship, the sacraments, and prayer, for God is not here; He is out there somewhere.

Jesus says that such a false world view must be discarded, once and for all, if we are to experience the real power in prayer.

II. The Christian World View

The second picture Jesus draws for us is the right world view — the Christian world view. Jesus says that we should view life as living in the same house with a loving, all-powerful, heavenly Father Who is always ready and willing to supply our needs when we ask, seek, and open our lives to Him through prayer. Instead of being separated from us, He is always with us. Jesus says it like this:

“And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”
(Lk 11:9-13)

That's the good news: God is always with us like a loving Father, for God is love and God is Spirit. Jesus became man like us and lived among us to show us this. At the same time Jesus warns us that Satan is also with us as an enemy who would destroy us, for Satan is also spirit — evil spirit. Satan is an evil spirit who would give us poisonous serpents and scorpions instead of life-giving food. He is a spirit who would destroy life instead of re-creating it. The point Jesus wants us to see is this: as physical human beings, while we are in this life we must live and have our being in spiritual as well as physical worlds.

NOTES

- First, we live in a physical world where physical needs must be met.
- At the same time, we live in God’s spiritual world, where our loving, heavenly Father wants to meet our needs and re-create us.
- An evil spiritual realm is also all about us, where Satan seeks to destroy us by giving us a poisonous serpent instead of the life-giving food we need.

Jesus came to show us that even though we must live in physical and spiritual worlds at the same time, there is a way we can have eternal life — by which He means the “God-Life”! We can have it, He says, only by closing our lives to the evil spiritual realm of Satan which is all around us and by opening our lives to the life-giving, healing, spiritual kingdom of God, which, like the wind, is also all around us. This is why I said at the beginning that we have come to one of the most important crossroads in our *Journey Into Discipleship*. Here we see Jesus pointing to the way that leads to life and the enemy pointing to the way that leads to death. The way that leads to life, says Jesus, is through prayer. It is through prayer that we must close our lives to the evil spiritual power of the enemy; and it is through prayer that we must open our lives to the Holy Spirit of God as our life-giving, healing power in life.

It is only after showing us all of this in these two graphic pictures that Jesus concludes with this lesson:

Discipleship Lesson #8

The power in prayer is receiving God’s Holy Spirit.

Because of the two pictures He has drawn for us, we can understand what He means. Now, it is clear that only when we view our world as a world where God is actually with us all of the time can we begin to put the pieces of our faith together. When we see our world as a world where God is with us then:

- Prayer becomes the way we open our lives to the Holy Spirit of God Who is always present with us.
- Faith becomes the way we receive this life-giving, healing power right now.
- The atonement of Jesus then spans the years in the Spirit of the living Christ Who is always with us to deliver us from the power of evil spirits.
- Eternal Life begins right now and death of our physical bodies only releases our spiritual being to a greater life.
- Because God is always with us, we can always have the life-giving, healing power we need to deal with evil, sickness, and infirmities and be victor over them.
- Worship, the sacraments, scripture, and prayer become the means for

opening our lives to the life-giving, healing Holy Spirit and our means for receiving this dynamic power.

Yes, the good news is, God is always with us and prayer is the way we make this presence a reality in our lives. When you grasp this truth, then almost everything in life can become a means of opening our lives to God's life-giving, healing Holy Spirit. This is what Paul means when he exhorts us to pray without ceasing. He is simply saying, that all of life should be a prayer. All of life should be an opening of our lives to God's life-giving Holy Spirit — His healing Spirit, His Spirit of power, His Spirit of Truth!

For example, this should be the meaning of what we are about to do right now on this special Thanks-Sharing Sunday. As we bring our pledges and drop them into the Joash Chest, it should be a means of opening our physical lives to His spiritual blessings. It should be a means of giving eternal meaning and significance to our physical possessions. It should be a means of demonstrating that in this area of our lives we are shutting Satan out and asking God in. It should be a means, not only of pledging our money to the church, but also a means of seeking more of God's Holy Spirit in our lives by giving more of ourselves to Him. In short, it should be a means of experiencing the real power in prayer, for the good news is, God is always with us and He will give His Holy Spirit to all who ask Him. And we ask Him anytime we give more of ourselves to Him. In the final analysis, prayer is our opportunity to give more of ourselves to God, so He can give more of Himself to us. When Jesus says, "Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him," He's not talking about a mere asking with our lips; He's really telling us the secret to the power-filled life. He's telling us that God can bless only what we ask Him to bless. How do we ask Him to bless it? Why, there's only one way we can sincerely ask and that is by yielding it to Him. So, the secret to the power-filled life is this: God can bless only what we yield to Him, but He will bless all we do yield to Him.

God can bless our marriage only when we yield our marriage to Him, but He will bless our marriage when we do yield it to Him. God can bless our money only when we yield it to Him, but He will bless our money when we do yield it to Him. The same is true with every area of our lives.

The good news is, God is with us. Just as surely as God created this physical world for us and provided for all of our physical needs, so He created His spiritual world for us and provided for all of our spiritual needs. God is with us right now, waiting for us to open more of our lives to Him so He can bless our lives with His all-powerful Spirit. The power in prayer is yielding more of ourselves to God, so He can give more of His Holy Spirit to us.

"And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. . . If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk 11:9 & 13)

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #8?
2. Describe the Closed World View.

What are some ways this world view affects our Christian faith?

Where have you encountered this world view recently? Check newspapers, TV, etc.

3. Describe the Christian World View.

What are some ways this world view impacts our lives?

What world view underlies your own personal life-style?

Give an example.

Search the Scriptures

4. Read John 11:11-44. Think about the urgency of the request from Martha and Mary, and consider these questions:

How did Jesus feel about Lazarus and his sisters?

Why didn't He go immediately — why did He let Lazarus die?

Didn't He care about the pain and grief they would suffer? Tell how this passage supports your answer.

5. What was your need when you last urgently asked God for help?

Did He hear you? Did He answer you? If so, how?

6. What does Jesus promise to give us in answer to this kind of supplication?

Internalize God's Word

7. Use Luke 11:5-13 as a basis for Praying God's Word (see the Appendix).

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Memory scripture: Luke 11:9 and 13
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Notes

Sermon 9: Know Your Enemy

A specific motif runs throughout the Bible from the opening pages to the end — the motif of conflict, what I call the *battle motif*. Genesis opens with it. God no sooner creates the earth and man than this motif is introduced as a battle between the divine will of God for man on one hand, and the power of evil to thwart God's will on the other. This battle continues to rage throughout the pages of the Bible to the final book of Revelation. There in vivid word-picture and symbolism we are given a glimpse of the final battle for the souls of men, and we see Satan fall like lightning as Jesus Christ, God's answer to evil, reigns victorious.

With all of scripture sounding this battle motif is it any wonder that early in our *Journey Into Discipleship* Jesus devotes a special discipleship lesson to emphasize how a disciple must know his enemy and what he must do to be victorious in this battle for life? In the 11th chapter of Luke, beginning with verse 14, we are told that when Jesus cast a demon out of a mute man, some said He did it by the power of Satan rather than the power of God. In answering this charge Jesus shows that enlisting as disciples means enlisting for battle against the powers of evil as He says,

“Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? . . . But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”
(Lk 11:17-18, 20-23).

In World War II, I was with the division that made the initial assault on Omaha Red Beach in Normandy. To prepare us for this battle after Africa and Sicily we returned to England for several months of intensive training. All of this training focused on two things:

- 1) Helping us know everything we could possibly know about our enemy, and
- 2) Equipping us with the best arms possible and training us in using them.

Those are always the two most important things in any battle: know your enemy, and, properly arm yourself for battle. This is exactly what Jesus is saying to His disciples here. He is saying, “Disciples, be prepared for spiritual warfare. Be prepared by knowing your enemy and by being properly armed!” This is discipleship lesson number nine in our *Journey Into Discipleship*.

Scripture

Luke 11:14-23

Text

Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? . . . But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Luke 11:17-18, 20

Discipleship Lesson #9

**A disciple must be prepared for spiritual warfare,
by knowing his enemy and by arming himself properly.**

I. Know Your Enemy

When our outfit landed on the beaches of Normandy, we knew the location of every pillbox and the fire power in each. We knew where the barbed wire and mine fields were located. We knew the number of enemy soldiers on the beaches and the divisions in reserve. We knew everything we could possibly know about our enemy, and consequently we knew his strength and where he was vulnerable; because of this we won the battle. Jesus says the same is true in this battle for we must know the same thing about our spiritual enemy. Where can we get such a briefing on our spiritual enemy? Why, in the Bible, of course. The Bible gives us a very vivid word-picture of Satan.

The Bible first tells us that Satan is a creature of heavenly places—a fallen angel, which simply means that he is spirit. As spirit he is all around us; he is everywhere, so we are always subject to his attack. The Bible calls our enemy by many different names, such as Satan, the Devil, the Tempter, and the Evil One. Regardless of what name you call him, his manner of acting is always the same. He seeks to lead all men into sin, because he himself is a sinner, says the Bible (1 Jn 3:8). That's why he's called the Tempter. He tempts men by promising them, as a reward for disobeying God, special earthly pleasures (1 Cor 7:1-5), or earthly power (Mt 4:8-11), or a knowledge like God's (Gen. 3:5). To accomplish this he lies and the truth is not in him, so John in his Gospel calls him the father of lies (Jn 8:44).

The Bible goes on to say that Satan is the ruler of an army of fallen angels or demons and his army is the arch-enemy of the human race (Mt 13:39), and his might in the present world is such that sometimes he is called the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4). The Bible also tells us that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), while he is in fact the prince of darkness. He operates not only on earth, but also in the upper regions, being called the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). In the best description of our enemy in the Bible, Paul says in the 6th chapter of Ephesians:

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:11-12).

Here, Paul is telling us four specific things about our enemy which we must know if we are to be victorious in this battle for life. First, Paul says that we

are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against *principalities*, by which he means that we are fighting against a highly organized Satanic spiritual kingdom. He is telling us that Satan is spirit and his spiritual kingdom is organized as an evil spiritual army with orders to undermine and destroy not only individuals but institutions as well — marriages, homes, churches, communities and nations.

Second, Paul say, we are fighting against *powers*—evil spiritual powers. The meaning of the word *power* is the *ability to accomplish purpose*. Paul wants us to understand that our enemy does have the ability to undermine and destroy us as individuals as well as our marriages, homes, churches, communities, and nations. We are fighting against a powerful enemy, and we had better recognize it or his power will destroy us.

Also, we are fighting against the *world rulers of this present darkness*. In effect Paul is saying, “Christian, look at this enemy against which you must do battle, this evil demonic power that has already enslaved men so that the whole world is now living in darkness.” By darkness Paul means that because of the evil works of Satan mankind has been cut off from the light of God. This is why John tells us that Jesus is the Light of the world and in 1 John 3:8 we are told, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” — to replace darkness with light.

The fourth thing we must know about our enemy, says Paul, is that we are fighting against *spiritual hosts of wickedness*. We are fighting against evil spirits all around us who will stoop to anything to win. They have no rules, except the rules of lies and deception. Wickedness is the aim of Satan’s army, so wickedness is its strategy and its tactics too.

That’s the Bible’s composite picture of our enemy: he is an evil spiritual power, having a highly organized army of evil, pervasive spirits, with the power and ability to take and control the whole world and plunge it into total darkness of wickedness and evil. Because Satan is wickedness and evil himself, he will stoop to anything and stop at nothing to destroy you, your home, your church, your community, and your nation.

Could it be that the world is in such a mess today because, with our education and scientific discoveries, the Church and most Christians have become too sophisticated to believe in a personal devil? In direct contradiction to Holy Scripture, we’ve refused to accept the reality of an evil spiritual power all around us and we’ve refused to accept as truth the battle motif running through the entire Bible. When we turn to the Bible itself we find both Jesus and Paul confronting us and saying: “Christian soldier, wake up! Wake up, for you are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places!” But Paul doesn’t stop there and neither must we.

II. Properly arm yourselves!

It's not enough just to know our enemy; we must go on to properly arm ourselves against him. How can we do that? Let's go back to our original scripture lesson in the 11th chapter of Luke, verses 14-23, and see what Jesus tells us. Remember, Jesus has just cast a demon out of a man and those who see it happen accuse Him of being a henchman of the Devil instead of acknowledging Him as the Son of God. Jesus replies:

“Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? . . . But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Lk 11:17-18, 20).

By telling a simple story, Jesus acknowledges that Satan is a strong, powerful enemy, fully armed for his purpose. He goes on to say, “When one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him” the victory is complete. Then Jesus concludes with:

“He who is not with me is against me” [that is, fighting on the side of the enemy] *“and he who does not gather with me scatters”* [that is, assists the enemy in his plan of wickedness and destruction] (Lk 11:23).

The important question is, how can we arm ourselves against the enemy and join the army of Jesus Christ? According to Jesus there is only one way and that is by having an unshakable faith in Jesus Christ as our Victor. “He who is not with me is against me!” The Bible says we arm ourselves with faith. We arm ourselves with faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God Who is more powerful than Satan and Who has already assaulted him and overcome him. Jesus has already faced Satan in all of his power, deceit, lies, wickedness and evil and defeated him. This is why John declares,

“The reason the Son of God came into the world was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8).

The Bible wants us to see that the only power on this earth more powerful than the evil power of Satan is the holy, righteous, saving power of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus came to this earth so that you and I can have this power and be saved from Satan and evil and saved to His kingdom of love and right relationships both now and throughout all eternity. How? The Bible says there is only one way: by faith in Him as our Savior and Lord.

When we set faith in Jesus in the context of this battle motif with Satan, what does this mean? What does it mean to arm ourselves with faith? The good news is that Paul tells us exactly what it means in the 6th chapter of Ephesians immediately after giving us the perfect word-picture of our enemy. Paul doesn't stop with just helping us to know our enemy, and neither must we. Rather, he uses the transitional word “Therefore” and goes right on. Once you know your enemy he says,

“Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:13).

Then, Paul lists the six parts of this armor which are the six things which go to make up an unshakable faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, our Savior and Lord. To help us visualize them better and remember them longer, I’m going to change the order slightly and begin at the top of the head and work down the body as we put on the whole armor of God now. Before I do it, remember that these are your only arms against Satan who is out to destroy you, your home, your church, your community, and your nation. To win this battle you must put on this armor of God each day and you must wear all of it every day. You cannot leave off a single part of it, nor miss a single day, or there will be a crack in your armor of faith and Satan will attack you at that very vulnerable point.

We must first put on the **helmet of salvation** by putting on faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Through faith, we must accept the fact that Jesus has already won the battle for us and by faith in Him we are no longer under the ruler of darkness but now live in the light. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are now justified before God as a child of God, destined for eternal life. That’s the helmet of salvation we must put on every day.

Next, we must put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, by putting our faith in the living Christ as our own righteousness. By accepting the gift of His Holy Spirit, through faith, we accept the fruit of His own character. Through faith, we are now under the dominion of His Holy Spirit Who is our righteousness and sanctifies us in His own likeness.

Third, we must gird ourselves with the **belt of truth** by accepting, through faith God’s Word in Christ as our own truth. It must be the truth we live by each day. Through faith in His Word as truth we are set free from the lies and deceit of Satan.

Then we must take up the **shield of faith** by putting our trust in Jesus Christ as our protector against the wiles of the devil. Through faith, we must let Him cover us with His blood, as the shield of the Roman soldier covered the soldier from head to toe.

Fifth, we must take up the **sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God**, as our personal weapon by putting our faith in the Holy Spirit of Christ as our Divine Interpreter of Holy Scripture. By joining together, through faith, the Word of God and the Spirit of God we have a two-edged sword, honed to perfection, with which to fight this battle for life. It’s the weapon with which Jesus has already defeated our enemy and the only weapon with which he can be defeated today.

Finally, the **equipment of the gospel of peace** must shod our feet, through faith in Jesus Christ as our hope, we step out into our world each day unafraid, with assurance of both daily and ultimate victory. Through

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faith in Jesus Christ as our hope we are able to live life with the peace that passeth all understanding for we walk in the gospel of peace each day. That's what Jesus means when He tells us that to be victorious in this battle for life we must arm ourselves with an unshakable faith in Him. We must be on His side. So, perhaps, we should now change our ninth discipleship lesson slightly to read like this:

Discipleship Lesson #9

A disciple must be prepared for spiritual warfare, by knowing his enemy and by arming himself with an unshakable faith in Jesus Christ, which he does by putting on the whole armor of God daily.

Yes, while we are on this earth we must always be engaged in a life and death battle with a wicked, evil, deceitful enemy. But the good news is, we have an all-powerful Lord, Who has already won the victory for us!

Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4b KJV).

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #9?
2. Our training for battle with the Enemy must focus on what two important things?
3. Have you ever had an experience in which you felt you were dealing with an actual spiritual power — the Enemy? If so, describe.
4. Do you see the Enemy's influence in the lives of others or of society? If so, describe.

Search the Scriptures

5. Find characteristics of the enemy in each of the following scriptures and name each in a word or short phrase.

John 8:44

1 Pet 5:8-9

2 Cor 11:14 b

1 Jn 3:8

Eph 6:12

1 Jn 4:4

Col 2:15

Rev 20:10

Write a description of the Enemy based on your findings in these scriptures.

6. What was Jesus' weapon in His personal battle with Satan (Mt 4:4, 7, 10)?
7. In addition to this weapon, how are we equipped to deal with the Enemy according to each of the following scriptures?

Mt 10:1a

Lk 10:19

Jn 14:12-17 & Lk 11:13

1 Cor 15:57

Eph 6:10-11

Jas 4:7 & 1 Pet 5:8-9a

Internalize God's Word

8. Clothe yourself each morning in the armor God has tailor-made for you (see page 77-78).

Memory scripture: Romans 8:38-39

Notes

Sermon 10: That First Stumbling Block

When you look at a series of Jesus' teachings as we are doing in our *Journey Into Discipleship*, you can't keep from being amazed at how Jesus can pack so much truth into so few words. In our Scripture — only three sentences, verses 24, 25, and 26 of chapter 11 of Luke — Jesus not only paints an unforgettable picture of the worst thing that can happen to us as disciples, but also goes on to give us a prescription for the perfect preventive.

You will recall that in Discipleship Lesson #9 Jesus warned us that when we become disciples we must be prepared for attack by our enemy Satan and we must prepare ourselves for this attack by knowing Satan's evil tactics and arming ourselves with an unshakable faith in Christ. Now, in Luke 11:24-26 Jesus says this:

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

I. The Empty House

Here, in this graphic picture, the first thing Jesus wants us to see is this: the worst thing that can happen to a person is to be empty. Why is this so? Let me illustrate with an experience out of my own life, using our Lord's metaphor of an empty house. When I entered the ministry at the age of 40, we lived in Oklahoma City. A few years before that we had bought what we thought was our dream house and expected to live there the rest of our lives. Every family has one, I guess — their dream house — the home you have pictured in your mind and dreamed about for years, the home, where in your mind's eye you can see your children growing up and all of the exciting things that happen through the years.

Ours was on 15th Street, a street lined with large sheltering trees; and comfortably spaced among these trees were the old, stately homes of the early settlers of the city. We had bought one of these old houses — 12 rooms, with full attic and basement — and had a great time tearing out partitions, re-wiring, re-plumbing, and re-decorating until it fit the picture in our minds of our dream house. Before that we had lived in the 5-room house we had bought after the war on the G.I. Bill, and our first two children, a boy and a girl, had to share the same bedroom. Now in this spacious, old house we had plenty of breathing room. I had a study of my own, Harriett had her own special places to sew and a music room, and the

Scripture

Luke 11:24-26 and
Galatians 2:19-3:5

Text

When the unclean spirit has gone out of man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first

Luke 11:24-26

Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?

Galatians 3:3

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children had separate bedrooms and even a play room. What a joy it was for all of us. We really “lived it up!”

When I entered the ministry, I turned our dream house over to a real estate man to sell. Through a series of almost unbelievable events, such as the death of the man who first signed a contract to buy it and then the death of the real estate man himself, this house stood empty for over a year.

My first pastorate was in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, at a salary of \$4800 per year. Sallisaw was almost 200 miles from Oklahoma City and all of that 200 miles was over narrow two-way slabs with blind curves and narrow bridges. With my salary and those roads, we didn't make many trips from Sallisaw to Oklahoma City! Consequently, when after a year I went back to our dream house, I was not prepared for what I saw. Have you ever been in a dream house that's been empty for over a year? It's one of the most depressing things you can do. Where once your eyes beheld only beauty, now they fall on dreary ugliness everywhere. Where once your ears heard laughter, now they hear only the squeaks and groans of emptiness. Where once there was joyful, exciting life, now the stench of decay and death fills your nostrils. Where once your heart rejoiced in a full, live house, now it aches from the ghastly emptiness which engulfs you.

You see, a house is not built to stand empty. Emptiness goes against everything a house stands for. It's built to be lived in. Jesus tells this unforgettable story about the empty house to reveal to us that the same truth applies to life. Life was not created to stand empty; emptiness goes against everything that life stands for. The reason emptiness is the worst thing that can happen to a person is because, like my dream house, you don't stay empty. Emptiness invites all of those ugly, loathsome things to creep and crawl into your life and take over occupancy there.

II. The Spirit-Filled House

As Jesus paints this ugly picture of the empty house, He not only wants us to see this picture; He also wants us to see the contrasting picture He is holding beside it. He wants us to see the dream house of life He's come to build us. He wants us to see that, as His disciples, we are meant to live this life of discipleship by His grace by being full, not empty. He is to be our righteousness, our goodness. He is to be our truth, our wisdom. He is to be our power, our strength. And He gives us this life of grace by filling us with His Holy Spirit. We can accept this life of grace — this gift of His Holy Spirit — only through faith in Him. If we shut the door of faith and don't let Christ fill our house of life with His Holy Spirit, we are giving an open invitation to “seven worse devils to enter and dwell there!”

Who or what are these seven worse devils? Well, in the first place you need to realize that in the Bible, the number 7 has a very special meaning. It means perfection, or without limitation. For example, Jesus says we are to forgive those who sin against us seven times seven, by which He means that

forgiveness is unlimited. So, seven worse devils simply means an unlimited number of them. It means there is no stopping place. It means they just keep on coming as they did in my own dream house. In the 5th chapter of Galatians Paul does list some of these seven worse devils for us, but after the list grows to fifteen, Paul gets tired and just concludes with “and the like.”

The important thing is not identifying all of these ugly, loathsome things that occupy our lives when we’re empty, for we all know that’s not what we want in our lives. The important thing is knowing how to avoid the emptiness that invites them in. Fortunately for us, Paul expounds upon this theme in the New Testament again and again. He says there are two stumbling blocks to living a life of grace through faith, two stumbling blocks to being filled with the Spirit of God, two things that will make us empty.

III. The First Stumbling Block — Legalism

The first stumbling block can best be seen when you look at the Jews, says Paul, for this is what caused the Jews to stumble; Paul calls this stumbling block *the law*. The second stumbling block can best be seen when you look at the Greeks, says Paul, for this is what caused the Greeks to stumble; Paul calls this stumbling block *knowledge*.

The Jews insisted upon substituting the law for faith and thus closed the door of their lives to the grace of God in Christ. The Greeks insisted upon substituting their own personal knowledge for faith and thus closed the door of their lives to the grace of God in Christ. Both Jew and Greek did it with the same result. It left an emptiness in them that invites all those ugly, loathsome things that they didn’t want into their lives. In this sermon we will consider the first stumbling block. Jesus deals specifically with the second stumbling block in lesson number twelve, which we shall look at later. For now let’s turn our attention to our Lord’s tenth discipleship lesson, which is this:

Discipleship Lesson #10

The first stumbling block that a disciple must avoid is legalism.

What is *legalism*? Legalism is simply substituting religious rules for the Spirit of Christ. Legalism is trying to drive out all of those unwanted things in our lives through living by rule instead of living by grace. Legalism is a religion of rules instead of a life of grace. Legalism emphasizes what man must not do, instead of what God will do. Legalism stresses the weakness of man, instead of the power of God in Christ. Why does legalism make us empty? Because it closes the door of faith by putting our trust in ourselves. Why does legalism invite in seven worse devils? Because it closes the door to faith and opens the door to self-righteousness, to a critical spirit, to judgmentalism, and to pride.

The first stumbling block every new Christian must face is legalism. Unfortunately many would-be disciples never get past this great stone of stumbling. Instead, they spend the rest of their lives trying to codify the grace of God in Jesus Christ. I know because this is what I grew up on for the first 18 years of my life. Even after I personally met Christ I tripped over this stone of stumbling by laying down as law how others must live by religious rules, and by substituting my religious rules for the Spirit of Christ. Seven worse devils rushed into that emptiness, devils like pride, a critical spirit, self-righteousness, judgmentalism, and resentment.

This is what Nicodemus the Pharisee wanted to do, too. But Jesus said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again. You must be filled with my Spirit, which you can no more direct by your manmade rules than you can direct the wind!" (See John ch. 3) Paul says the same thing to the Galatians at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3, when he says:

"For ...I died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God . . ."
(Gal 2:19-20).

"O foolish Galatians," Paul cries, "Who has bewitched you! . . . Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of law, or by . . . faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" (Gal. 3:1-4).

That's the question! Have you stumbled over the stumbling block of legalism? That's the question every would-be disciple must answer before he can continue his *Journey Into Discipleship*. That's the question all of us need to ask ourselves today. Am I stumbling over the stumbling block of legalism? Do I substitute legalism for the Spirit of Christ in my life? Do I try to make Christianity into a religion of rules instead of a dynamic way of life? Have I tried to codify a life of grace into my own manmade rules? Do I think others must follow my moralistic rules or they're not Christian? Am I a legalist and a moralist instead of a Spirit-filled disciple of my Lord? Have I just emptied my house of life and left it empty?

That's the first stumbling block on this *Journey Into Discipleship*. Most Jews never got past it. Many church members today never get past it either. But if we are to be genuine disciples for our Lord we must avoid this stumbling block of legalism. How can we avoid it?

IV. Prescription for Legalism

Our Lord gives us His prescription for legalism. But before we state it, let's be sure we see clearly the picture that Jesus has set before us. First, the picture shows us that the worst thing that can happen to us is to be empty, for emptiness is an open invitation to all those ugly, loathsome things we don't want in our lives. Then, it shows us that the worst way to try to rid

ourselves of these unwanted things is by legalism, that is, a religion of rules. This only creates more emptiness and the last state becomes worse than the first as seven worse devils rush in.

What Jesus really wants us to see is a picture exactly the opposite of that dismal empty house. He wants us to see His prescription for emptiness. He wants us to see our own dream house filled with all those things that make life exciting and beautiful. He wants us to see our house of life filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. He wants us to see every room of our dream house filled with His Holy Spirit — His amazing grace. How can this happen? In only one way: by opening the door of faith into every room in our house of life, and inviting Him to come in and be Lord there. That's our Lord's prescription for emptiness. Jesus didn't tell this unforgettable story just to inform us that the worst thing that can happen to us is to be empty. No, He told it primarily to assure us that the best thing that can happen to us is to fill our house of life with His Holy Spirit. He told it to urge us to fill every room so full of His Holy Spirit that there is no place for those ugly, loathsome, unwanted things. That's the only way you can transform a "don't religion" into a "do way of life"! That's the only way you can transform moralism into genuine morality. That's the only way to keep from substituting legalism for the Spirit of Christ in your life.

It can be done only through your faith; that is, by a specific act of your will as you honestly take inventory of each room in your house of life. You know what those rooms are: your work, your relationships, marriage, family, church, social life — and all the others. Jesus is showing us that the way to live in our dream house is to give His Holy Spirit dominion over every room in that house.

That's what faith really means. It means opening the door of each room in your house of life and inviting the living Christ to come in and take charge there. It means allowing the Spirit of Christ to rule over law, not vice versa. That's exactly what Paul means when he writes to the Galatians:

"For ...I died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

The good news is that Jesus came to this earth to show us what a dream house of life is really like. Then He sent His Holy Spirit to us so each one of us can live out our lives in this dream house. Right now Jesus is standing at the door of each room in your own dream house knocking — knocking, knocking. The next move is up to you! Will you open the door of faith and let Him come in?

Explore the Sermon

1. What is Discipleship Lesson #10?
2. According to this sermon, how does God want to fill our emptiness?
3. We shut out God's gift like the Jews, with _____ or like the Greeks, with _____. Is either of these a stumbling block for you?
4. Identify a time when you felt empty. What did you bring in to fill that emptiness — busyness, alcohol, TV, church work, etc.?
5. Are there times when you still feel empty? If so, how can you open yourself to what God wants to provide?
6. Read the following scriptures and answer these questions about each one: What gift is offered? By whom? To whom? What, if anything, is required of the recipient?

Jn 4:10 | Rom 3:23-26a | Eph 2:8 | Gal 2:15-16 | 1 Pet 1:3-5 | 2 Tim 1:9 | Tit 3:4-7

Internalize God's Word

7. In prayer ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth as you answer these questions posed in the sermon as a test for legalism in your own life:

Do I substitute legalism for the Spirit of Christ in my life?

Do I make Christianity into a religion of rules instead of a dynamic way of life?

Have I tried to codify a life of grace into my own manmade rules?

Do I think others must follow my moralistic rules or they're not Christian?

Am I a legalist and a moralist instead of a Spirit-filled disciple of my Lord?

Have I just emptied my house of life and left it empty?

Memory scripture: Eph 2:8

Notes

Journey Into Discipleship

Appendix

Steps in Praying God's Word

Choose a time and place where you can be alone and uninterrupted for at least 15 minutes. Take the phone off the hook. You have an appointment with God. Read through the following steps thoughtfully. The seven underlined verbs may help you remember how to proceed, but treat them as guideposts to help you find your way, not as rigid rules!

1. **Read** a passage of scripture. Read slowly; your objective is not to finish a chapter, nor even a sentence, but to enter an experience.

2. **Pray**, focusing your attention on Jesus. You want no spirit but His Holy Spirit in control!

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

3. **Relax** your body. Turn loose one muscle group at a time, starting with your toes. Physical relaxation helps your spirit become quiet and at rest. Breathe slowly and deeply, breathing in the Holy Spirit, breathing out tension. Let go and trust God.

*"In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (Is 30:15).*

4. **Recall** the scripture passage. Picture the scene vividly. Use as many of your five senses as possible. For example, if you are meditating on John 8:1-11 about the woman caught in adultery, the scripture has told you that it is early in the morning. Jesus is seated in the temple teaching the people. Probably His disciples are with Him as usual. They are interrupted by the scribes and Pharisees bringing the woman into their midst. What do you see, hear, smell, feel, taste? Experience the color and movement, hear the noise of the crowds and perhaps the sounds and odors from the sacrificial animals being sold nearby. Sense the mood of the crowd, the condemnation of the accusers.

5. **Enter** the scene as one of the participants. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which one you are: the accused woman, one of the scribes or a Pharisee, one of the people who had been listening to Jesus teach, or one of the disciples. Perhaps Jesus had been teaching on forgiveness. Live the entire event within yourself.

6. **Experience** whatever the Lord brings. Let Him apply this to your present life situation. Are you experiencing shame or fear over some sin in your life? Are you feeling self-righteous as you judge someone else? Are you having difficulty accepting Jesus' teaching that you are to not judge others? Are you questioning His compassion for someone you know? Is He expecting you to be compassionate? Are you slipping quietly away like the others? Allow the Risen Christ to lead you. Don't try to figure it out; don't write your own script. Just wait on the Lord. Allow Him to supply your need: comfort, forgiveness, conviction, guidance, compassionate understanding.

"...my word ...shall accomplish that which I purpose..." (Is 55:11)

7. **Express** to God your gratitude or your disappointment. If you use a Prayer Journal, you may want to record this experience and write down your insights. Continue to practice the presence of God. Be persistent in learning to pray God's Word.

Seven verbs: Read Pray Relax Recall Enter Experience Express

Journey Into Discipleship

Memory Cards

Journey Into Discipleship

God's Part

God's Word is Revealed, Inspired,
and Illuminated by the Holy Spirit
God's Word is Creative and Sustaining
God's Word Accomplishes Purpose
God's Word is Living and Active
God's Word is Life-Giving
God's Word is Healing

Our Part

Internalize the Word of God

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #1

A disciple does not react to other
people; he responds to Jesus as
the Lord of his life.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #2

A disciple's number one priority in
life must be following Jesus.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #3

As disciples we are called to be
the Body of Jesus Christ, and to
carry on His ministry.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #4

A disciple's greatest danger is
spiritual pride.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #5

The way of discipleship is
loving service, not piosity.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #6

As disciples we must attune
our lives to the rhythm of God's
creation by receiving Christ's
healing love, then giving that love
to others:
receive-give! receive-give!

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #7

To be disciples we must share in
the prayer life of Jesus and make
prayer a way of life.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #8

The power in prayer is receiving
God's Holy Spirit.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #9

A disciple must be prepared
for spiritual warfare,
by knowing his enemy and
by arming himself properly.

Journey Into Discipleship

Discipleship Lesson #10

The first stumbling block that a
disciple must avoid is legalism.

Sermon 1 Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword,
it penetrates even to dividing soul
and spirit, joints and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and
attitudes of the heart.
(NIV, ©2010)

Introduction 2 Corinthians 3:18

And we, who with unveiled faces
all reflect the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into his likeness
with ever-increasing glory,
which comes from the Lord,
who is the Spirit.
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 4 Matthew 23:12

For whoever exalts himself
will be humbled,
and whoever humbles himself
will be exalted.
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 3 John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you
and appointed you to go and bear fruit—
fruit that will last. Then the Father will give
you whatever you ask in my name.
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 2 Matthew 10:39

Whoever finds his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life for my sake
will find it.
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 7 Matthew 6:14-15

¹⁴For if you forgive men when
they sin against you, your heavenly
Father will also forgive you.
¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins,
your Father will not forgive your sins.
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 6 Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy
Spirit comes on you; and you will be my
witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 5 Luke 10:27

He answered:
" 'Love the Lord your God with
all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your strength and
with all your mind';
and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 10 Ephesians 2:8

For it is by grace you have been saved,
through faith—
and this not from yourselves,
it is the gift of God—
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 9 Romans 8:38-39

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death
nor life, neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation, will be able to
separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(NIV, ©2010)

Sermon 8 Luke 11:9, 13

⁹So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to
you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
¹³If you then, though you are evil,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your Father in heaven
give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
(NIV, ©2010)