

Discipleship Lesson 4 1Q 2008

Lessons from Would-be Disciples

SABBATH

Read memory text – thoughts?

Is this saying that we only get one shot with Jesus and if we don't go then we have missed out? Is it saying that if we have started with Jesus and stumble we are lost and can't return?

What evidence? Did the disciples start with Jesus and stumble over who was going to be the greatest? And three years later were they stumbling over who was going to be the greatest? And Peter, did he start with Jesus, put his hand to the plow, but deny Christ three times with curses? Did Jesus continue to strive for Peter? Did Peter come back and work effectively for Christ?

Then this text cannot mean we have one chance with Christ and that is it. It cannot mean that if we start with Christ and turn back that we cannot come back to Christ. Then what does it mean?

He is saying, if you are working for Christ, for God's kingdom you cannot do effective work if you are looking away from God, if you are looking to others, if you are looking at the past. Using the plowing metaphor, one cannot plough a fit row if one is looking backward while plowing. Today we might say, one cannot drive safely, effectively, fitly if one is looking in the rear view mirror all the time.

This is the GNT of Luke 9:62,

- Jesus said to him, "Anyone who starts to plough and then keeps looking back is of no use to the Kingdom of God."

One of the founders of our church wrote the following:

"And He said to another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." {3T 500.1}

No earthly ties, no earthly considerations, should weigh one moment in the scale against duty to the cause and work of God. Jesus severed His connection from everything to save a lost world, and He requires of us a full and entire consecration. There are sacrifices to be made for the interests of God's cause. The sacrifice of feeling is the most keen that is required of us; yet after all it is a small sacrifice... {3T 500.2}

Thoughts? Why the feelings? How do the feelings being sacrificed connect to Jesus statement of looking back?

When you sacrifice something for anyone, but in your heart you really didn't want to give it up, how will you feel? Will your feelings pull at you? Will your feelings tempt you? And if you allow that to occur, if you embellish such feelings, will the heart be committed to Christ or will the heart be holding on to the world? And if the heart is not open, freely open and committed to Christ can He heal us?

James 1:13 states our feelings lead us into temptation, we frequently become attached, emotionally attached to things and people in this world, some of which are unhealthy. God seeks to remove all unhealthy ties and connections from our lives, but it will not always feel good when this happens. Our feelings can tempt us to turn away from the path of health, the path of life, the path of goodness – what some call the path of duty.

Read bottom two paragraphs "Probably, though..." Thoughts?

What do you think it means decisions of the heart? When the Bible refers to the heart what is it referring to? The pump in the chest or the mind?

- Above all else, guard your heart,
for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23
- Circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit,
not by the written code. Romans 2:29

What are these texts talking about? Our feelings of attachment? What do you think the Bible means when it says the heart? Is the origin of our feelings in some organ other than our brain? Is the origin of our motives, passions, longings, desires, attachments in some organ other than our brain?

Recently some researchers are suggesting that the heart is actually the pump in the chest. They are examining the magnetic field generated by the heart, which is stronger than the one generated by the brain. They cite the fact the heart has nerve cells, which are used for pacing the heart and some are making hypothesis that the pump in the chest is a second brain, a place where we can sense and know things. Thoughts?

I believe these ideas are wrong – the heart is not capable of cognition, it receives input from the brain and sends input to the brain just as every organ of the body does, it is the brain that perceives and experiences not the heart.

SUNDAY

Read Matthew 8:19,20

Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Thoughts? Why did Jesus respond this way? Jesus was trying let him know what kind of kingdom Jesus was promoting – was there confusion over this? Did His own disciples have confusion over this?

What kind of kingdom was Christ promoting? A kingdom of love, truth and freedom. Is such kingdom clearly revealed in the world today?

At the end of time there will be two groups – those who value Christ's kingdom, the remnant and those who value Satan's kingdom, the beast system. How can we tell them apart? How can we be sure to be a member of Christ's kingdom?

Read Mark 10:29,30 then bottom green section:

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

Thoughts? What are the 100 fold advantages Christ promises? Would they not be in keeping with His kingdom? What is God's kingdom? A kingdom of truth and love! How do we get these advantages?

How does truth make your life better here and now?

- If you are a lover of truth, a person who values God's kingdom and therefore pursues all truth and wants all truth to be applied effectively to your life – how does that impact you?
- Would you live a healthier lifestyle? Would that have benefits?
- Would it make a difference in how you deal with people and relationships?

- Inappropriate guilt is always the result of believing some lie – would never experiencing inappropriate guilt be a benefit?
- What is the value of a clear conscience and internal tranquility?

How does love make your life better here and now?

- When we act in self interest what is the consequence? Damage to reason and conscience with increased fear and insecurity – is there benefit to our lives here and now when we live in love
- Increased fear and insecurity result in activation of stress hormones with subsequent damage to body and brain, not to mention the unhealthy substances people use to calm themselves.
- Psalms 19:7 the law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul, Does experiencing the new covenant (Heb 8:10) law of love written on the heart and reviving the soul have value or benefit here and now?

So are the rewards God promises arbitrary rewards handed out by the ruler of the universe or are they the natural consequences of coming back into unity and oneness with Him?

Is God like the judge at the fair, going around and handing out ribbons or does God offer Himself and union with Him and when we come into unity with Him we naturally reap all the benefits?

Likewise those who reject God does God hand out punishment or do they naturally reap it?

- Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last

day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. John 6:53-56

MONDAY

Read Matthew 8:21,22

- Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Thoughts? What does this mean? The lesson suggests that the man's father wasn't dead and what the "disciple" was saying was let me return home until my father dies and once he dies and is buried then I can liquidate his estate, tie up loose ends and then be free to follow you.

If this is the position of the "disciple" what is the problem?

How might we fall into the same trap?

Is there danger on the other side? Is there danger in avoiding family responsibilities in order to do church service? Where is the balance?

TUESDAY

Read Mark 10:17-23

- As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him.

"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

Thoughts?

Why did Jesus say no one is good except God, was He saying that He Himself was not good? He was challenging the beliefs of the young man, why are you calling me good – do you recognize me for who I am? Notice the young man didn't say, "But Master, you are God on earth. You and the Father are One. You are every bit as good as the Father." Thus revealing that the young man didn't really know Jesus.

Read middle question "Why would Jesus..." and then bottom paragraph – thoughts?

The lesson suggests money became an idol for him, meaning he loved his money more than God – but why do you think that was? Why was the money so important to one who was seeking so intently on doing what God wanted? Do you think the young man was a total fraud, not having any desire for God at all and just pretending in order to get ahead, or was there some part of the man that was genuinely searching and seeking to follow God? If he was seeking the truth then why did money hold such a powerful position in his life?

What was the common theology of the day? If you're healthy and wealthy then you are blessed of God, if you're poor and sick you are cursed of God. So what would it mean for this man to give up his wealth? To give up the evidence of his acceptance and good standing with God, so what is the root problem?

The same root problem the disciples had – not knowing God, not appreciating His kingdom, methods and principles. So the

root problem was accepting a system which twisted the concepts of God such that the man valued the wrong things and didn't actually value God at all.

How are we in danger of doing the same today? What about valuing our membership in an organization? Our healthy diet, our faithful tithe or worshipping on the right day? Do we ever cling to these as evidences of our acceptance with God? Is it possible to do all the right things but still have such a twisted view of God we are His enemies?

WEDNESDAY

Read John 3:1-21 – thoughts?

What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of truth, love and freedom

- What does it mean to be able to see the kingdom of God?
- Does this help us understand what being born again means?

What does it mean “just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life?”

- Does this have something to do with become a disciple?

Why does it say those who don't believe in Jesus stand condemned already? Condemned by who? Does it mean if we don't accept Jesus God condemns us? If we are condemned already does that mean that the Father has condemned us or does it mean our condition was already terminal?

THURSDAY

Read Luke 4:16-30 – thoughts?

Why did they get so upset? How might we see this in our day? Have you known of people getting upset if you challenge their theology, people willing to run you out of town? How about

SDA's who get upset if you suggest people don't have to join this church to be saved? Or when you suggest God doesn't have to torture and kill the wicked because sin pays its wage and the wage is death – anyone get upset about that?

Read question two Friday – thoughts?

Read bottom green – thoughts?

Read question 1 Friday – thoughts?

What about how Christians treat homosexuality and abortion – is there danger of a herd mentality?

Read first paragraph Friday – thoughts? What truths are worthy of acceptance? What truths must we bring to the forefront? What principles are we to make known and live by? The truth about God, His character as revealed by Christ, the principles of love and liberty!

FRIDAY

Question 3 – thoughts? How can we mitigate these excuses? What truths can we present that can help? In your experience what approaches are more likely to bring you to commit to Christ and what are more likely to push you away?

Question 4 read and discuss.