

Discipleship Lesson 10 1Q 2008

Discipleship Under Pressure

SABBATH

Read Memory text and first two paragraphs – thoughts?

What is suggested in the lesson that is a major factor in wearing us down as we deal with the stresses of life?

Perspective and expectation, the lesson suggests a pessimistic perspective with expectation of bad outcomes wears us down. If this is your perspective in any endeavor, will that endeavor wear you down more quickly?

Yes, we know from neurobiology that when we have negative thought patterns, worries, irrational fears, pessimistic thinking we activate the stress center in the brain, Amygdala, which activates the hypothalamic pituitary axis causing increased amounts of stress hormones (glucocorticoids, adrenalin) as well as activating immune response with increased inflammatory factors resulting in damage throughout the body and exhaustion and depression.

How can we help prevent this type of thinking? Keeping a larger view, allow for possibilities beyond our immediate understanding – i.e. trust in God!

If you contracted the flu would you consider yourself blessed or lucky?

Jan 30, 2008 New Scientist reported on the 1918 flu pandemic that killed tens of millions of people worldwide. They noted that approximately 6 months prior to the major outbreak, a less virulent outbreak occurred in Scandinavia and those who contracted the flu in the summer were one tenth as likely to die if they caught the killer flu in the fall. And the cities where the less virulent flu struck had 40 times less deaths than those cities where it didn't strike. In other words the less

virulent form conferred protection. But what might you have been thinking if you had gotten the less virulent form, not knowing the future? Might you have thought why me? I eat right, exercise, do all the right things, why did I have to get sick? What if you got the flu 3 days before your wedding and had to postpone, might one be tempted to question God? Why me? Might one be tempted to be discouraged? But what if you knew this was conferring protection that will save your life when the deadly flu hits in 6 months?

How does this apply to our Christian journey?

Jump to THURSDAY's lesson

It quotes Matthew 26:56 "then all the disciples forsook him and fled." Do you think this had anything to do with perspective and expectation? Did this have anything to do with the view they were taking of events?

Read first two paragraphs – first, other than living at the time of the Apostles, what do you think would be the most privileged time to live? How about that generation which sees Jesus coming again – the translation generation?

Do you think being a sinful human explains all the difficulty the disciples had or was there more? Were their preconceived ideas, biases, expectations a barrier in addition to their fallen humanity?

Read middle dark section and bottom two paragraphs – are we as Christians ignoring Jesus warnings for us? What did the disciples ignore? What are we ignoring?

Matthew 24 – wars, famine, pestilence, persecution, false prophets, false Christs, false gospels, a great tribulation such as has never been seen – but does much of the Christian world teach a secret escape? Why were the disciples unprepared? Because they expected events to transpire differently that Christ had repeatedly told them, and what might happen to

those Christians who are expecting a secret rapture when terrible times break upon the earth?

How many of us want Jesus to come in our lifetime? Jesus said that these troubles of wars, pestilence, famine etc. were the “beginning of the labor pains.” When a woman goes into labor is the pain the worst at the beginning or right before delivery? What do we expect to happen before Jesus comes?

Do we want Him to come? What are we praying for? Are we praying Lord protect us, hold back the pain, hold back the troublesome times. Are we like a pregnant woman who says, Lord I long to see my baby, but don't let any pain come upon me?

Revelation 12 describes those who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes as those who do not shrink from death. In Revelation 7 the angel comes from God telling the 4 angels who are holding the four winds to hold, hold, hold, until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, until we are healed, transformed, settled into the truth about God such nothing can move us. Do you think when that happens our prayers will change from protect us, keep us safe, hold back trouble, to bring it on Lord, let go and see us through to the end?

SUNDAY

First paragraph states, “Religious faith can be a very powerful tool, either for good or for evil. The same kind of drive that motivates someone to ‘lose his life’ (Matt 16:25) for Christ’s sake can, in other circumstances, drive others to blow themselves up in the name of God.”

Thoughts? What do you think about this statement? Do you believe the “same kind of drive” that motivates a follower of Christ motivates a follower of Satan? What is it that motivates a follower of Christ to give his life? Love for others, what is it that motivates a follower of Satan to strap bombs on himself or

herself and blow themselves up killing others? Hatred, anger, bitterness, resentment, but certainly not love for others.

What about the idea of faith, we could say that both groups do have faith, but is their faith the same kind of faith, what is the difference between Godly faith/saving faith and destructive faith?

Godly faith is an enlightened and intelligent faith, a faith that is based upon truth, respects individuality, that encourages reason, thinking exploration and evidence. Destructive faith damages the mind, discourages thinking, discourages the investigation of evidence and truth. Destructive faith requires one not to think, destructive faith is blind faith, an unenlightened faith.

Notice, destructive faith “requires” one not to think and investigate evidence, Godly faith promotes thinking and investigation of evidence and truth. But, sometimes people who are following God haven’t yet developed a mature enlightened faith and God still recognizes them as His children, but this should not be mistaken as evidence of what God wants.

Example: Rahab had an unenlightened faith and in her unenlightenment she lied, the three worthies had an enlightened faith and in their enlightenment they stood for the truth. Now God honored both because of the place they were in development i.e. Rahab had heard very little about God, but we shouldn’t use such examples of unenlightened faith as the ideal of what God wants, rather we should pursue the highest level of development and understanding and evidence and truth upon which to base our faith.

The disciples had faith, prior to the resurrection was their faith enlightened or unenlightened or partially enlightened? They understood that Jesus was the Messiah, but did they understand the nature of His kingdom?

The bottom paragraph in Sunday's lesson tells us the Bible doesn't teach the pursuit of political power as a means of carrying forward God's kingdom. What are God's methods?

The lesson points out that religion can be abused by political powers to control people and do horrible things. What are the core elements that must be taught in order for religion to be abused in this way?

1. lies about God – a God construct that coerces, is stern, requires appeasement and inflicts punishment
2. faith without evidence, faith without thinking, faith without reason
3. Focus on behavior rather than character resulting in ideas that reformation can be legislated and others can be forced to conform
4. Undermining the law of liberty, failing to promote genuine freedom of conscience

MONDAY

When Mary came and anointed Jesus feet with the expensive oil, Judas stirred up discontent amongst the disciples – what was the basis of his complaint? Where did Judas get the idea that money should not be wasted on extravagance? Had Jesus taught such principles? Had Jesus taught better to give than receive, better to sacrifice for others, giving to the less fortunate? So what was the problem when Judas supported Christ's ministry in this way?

Judas was looking out for himself, he really wasn't interested in the good of others but wanted the money in the bag he controlled so he could pilfer it. Conversely, Mary loved Jesus and had been listening to Him and realized He was going to His death and she took everything she had to get this perfume in order to anoint Him and honor Him before His death.

What lessons from this story apply today? What about when someone criticizes another person's behavior? What about

when someone spreads rumors about another? Is it dangerous for us to be judging others?

The lesson asks what does this tell us about the importance of motive in actions? Who can read the motives? Are things always as they appear? When a serpent speaks?

Where did Mary get so much money? How would we feel if a known drug lord donated \$1,000,000 toward the school building fund?

Bottom green read – thoughts? Is it enough to choose not to act on unhealthy motives and thoughts? No, this is what Saul of Tarsus thought, he thought the righteous were those who wanted to do bad things but had will power enough to choose not to. But Jesus taught in Matthew five that it is not enough to avoid the bad behavior we must also avoid doing it in our minds and hearts. And 2 Cor 10:3-5 states we must bring every thought into captivity to Jesus, why?

Because when we do it in our imagination the same neural circuits fire as if we do it in real life, thus our minds, neural networks and character cannot be transformed as long as we continue to choose evil in our hearts.

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph “A number of problems....”

First the lesson author has made a mistake, the disciples were not referring to Mt Carmel, the disciples were referring to 2 Kings 1:10-12 when Elijah called fire to consume the platoons of men.

Thoughts? Was it just misdirected zeal or was there more? Was there misunderstanding of God, His character, methods, principles and motives, misunderstanding the nature and character of sin and Satan?

What did Jesus say to them when they asked about calling fire down from heaven and destroying these people? "You don't know what spirit you are of" Meaning? They thought they were acting for God, but Jesus said they had the other spirit, the enemies attitude. How many Christians today hold the same attitude looking for God to one day rain fire down on the rejecters of His mercy?

The disciples knew that it was the purpose of Christ to bless the Samaritans by His presence; and the coldness, jealousy, and disrespect shown to their Master filled them with surprise and indignation. James and John especially were aroused. That He whom they so highly revered should be thus treated, seemed to them a wrong too great to be passed over without immediate punishment. In their zeal they said, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" referring to the destruction of the Samaritan captains and their companies sent out to take the prophet Elijah. They were surprised to see that Jesus was pained by their words, and still more surprised as His rebuke fell upon their ears: "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." Luke 9:54-56. {AA 540.2}

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. {AA 541.1}

Why the fire in Elijah's day – was it God's ideal? Or was it the only thing the people would respond to?

Read last paragraph “Even worse...” thoughts? What is the punishment for sin? According to the Bible what is sin’s punishment? Death, for how long? Eternal, did Jesus die eternally? Then if you hold the view that He took our punishment and the punishment is eternal death with no resurrection, did Jesus die such a death?

Maybe a better question, where does the punishment of sin come from? Does the punishment for sin come from God or from sin itself? In Genesis did God say He would have to kill them or they would die?

Romans 6:23, the wages of sin is death
James 1:13 sin when full grown brings forth death

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.
{1SM 235.2}

Now some good friends of mine have said, but Tim can’t you seen in the Bible and the writings of EGW where language is used that leads people to draw the other conclusion, that God’s justice requires him to inflict an external punishment upon the wicked. Let’s examine that and you will find it only leads to that conclusion for those who don’t actually move past what is said and examine what actually happened.

“The city of murderers is doomed! I myself will pile up the firewood. Bring more wood! Fan the flames! Cook the meat! Boil away the broth! Burn up the bones! Now set the empty bronze pot on the coals and let it get red-

hot....You will not be pure again until you have felt the full force of my anger. I, the Lord, have spoken. The time has come for me to act.” (Ezekiel 24:2,9-14).

But what actually happened?

Because of their refusal to follow God, His methods, principles, God set them free, He stopped interceding in their behalf, He removed His protective hand at their insistence and the Babylonians came and the Babylonians, not God, destroyed the city.

Then why would God speak like this?

The Israelites are stubborn,
like a stubborn mule.
How then can the LORD feed them
like lambs in a meadow? Hosea 4:16

Imagine being at a national park with steep canyon walls and your 10 year old son, who is known to be stubborn, unruly and doesn't easily do what you say. He is playing Frisbee and running toward the cliff – might you shout for him to stop, and if the child kept going, might you threaten the child – “If you don't stop...” And you don't have time to work your way up, with the cliff looming you don't say, “I will put you in time out for 5 minutes, I will ground you for a week” You say, “If you don't stop I will beat your backside raw.” And if the child doesn't stop, what actually happens?

- Do you beat the child?
- Do you get out your gun and shoot your child before your child hits the bottom of the ravine, in order to punish your child? No, what happens?
- Violations of the Law result in death, you don't have to do anything except cry.

Ephraim, Ephraim, How can I give you up, how can I let you go. Hosea 11:8

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I have longed to...”

“Oh my son, how I have longed to protect you, to keep you safe, but you were stubborn like a mule and wouldn’t listen...”

Look at how this is in EGW’s writings:

God has given in His word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Those who flatter themselves that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, have only to look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that "the wages of sin is death," that every violation of God's law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. *[WOW, that sounds like God is punishing, but keep reading]* He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin. And every soul that refuses to become a partaker of the atonement provided at such a cost must bear in his own person the guilt and punishment of transgression. {GC 539.3}

Notice that He experience the hiding of His Father’s face, and His heart broke, this caused His life to be crushed out. Notice the penalty is the penalty of sin, not the penalty of God. In the same section let’s keep reading:

God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalms 145:20; 37:38. The power and authority of

the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being. {GC 541.2}

Wow, another paragraph that sounds like God will inflict punishment upon the wicked. But let's keep reading...

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

Can you get love from people by threatening to kill and torture them if they don't love you? So notice we have to balance the previous statements with this that God does not force the will of any, no pleasure in slavish obedience, but what kind of obedience do we get if we say, if you don't obey I will torture and kill? So those who want to use this statement to prove God inflicts punishment haven't comprehended what they have read. Let's keep going:

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies." God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited. He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character. He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants

them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will? {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters. Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming

fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God. {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction, too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love. {GC 543.1}

What does God actually do? Does He have to inflict something upon them or does their own condition determine their destiny? In fact, God has been working to hold at bay the day of reaping to give time to be healed. Thoughts?

WEDNESDAY

Top paragraph – read – thoughts? Was Peter willing to die for Christ? When the soldiers came to take Jesus what did Peter do? Pull out his sword to attack, why? Did he think he would win against an entire guard, or was it possible he was willing to give his life? Jesus said, put away the sword those who live by the sword die by the sword, was Peter willing to die? What happened when Jesus did this? Did it blow Peter's mind?

Did Peter have a true conception of God's kingdom? So when he was willing to die, was he willing to die like Jesus?

How about in our lives what lessons can we learn from this?

FRIDAY

Read questions 1 and discuss – Did David use his initiative to pursuing the building of the temple and once when told couldn't build did he still go about planning and preparing?

Did this originate with David's desire to do something for God or did God program David to do this? Does every thought we have originate with God or does every good motive originate with God and then our individuality is free to manifest that God born motive with our own freedom and creativity?

Question 3 read and discuss

ADDENDUM

1918 flu pandemic had a trial run

30 January 2008
NewScientist.com news service

The flu pandemic that struck in the autumn of 1918 killed tens of millions worldwide. But it now seems that it had a widespread, and much milder, trial run.

Scandinavian health statistics record an unseasonable outbreak of flu in the summer of 1918. People who caught it were only a tenth as likely to die as those stricken in the autumn, but those who did catch it were mainly young adults - a hallmark of the autumn outbreak and a strong indication that the summer virus was closely related to it (*The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, [DOI: 10.1086/524065](https://doi.org/10.1086/524065)).

Previous studies have shown that the autumn virus spread relatively slowly. It had been hoped that this was a general feature of pandemics, because it would mean that "social distancing" measures such as closing schools could prevent deaths.

However, the Scandinavian figures suggest that the autumn virus spread slowly because the summer virus had already immunised many people. The team also found that the summer virus spread too fast for social distancing to work, but that the immunity it caused may have saved lives. Not every city got the summer flu and those that did may have had up to 40 times fewer deaths in the autumn.

If a pandemic behaved the same way now, this suggests we shouldn't try to avoid the first wave. Watching out for it could also give us time to make vaccine before the bad wave hits.