



## Discipleship Lesson 6 1Q 2014

### Discipling the Ordinary

Two weeks ago I was in St. Helena CA, speaking at The Haven, formerly known as Elmshaven. What a great experience. Record breaking turnout and the response to this picture of God was overwhelmingly positive.

Last week I spoke at East Cleveland SDA church and again the response was incredibly positive to this view of God.

Monday and Tuesday next week I will be speaking for the leadership teams of 15 Baptist churches in Texas. Please pray that God will bless this presentation.

For those who haven't yet heard, the long awaited book, *Servant God: The Cosmic Conflict Over God's Trustworthiness*, is now available on Amazon. It is an excellent resource, 19 authors, published by Loma Linda University Press. I wrote chapter two.

### SABBATH

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Read first paragraph, "Christ's death was..." thoughts?

For the believer in Christ this is certainly true, at the foot of the cross there is no difference, all are sinners. But, what about those who don't believe in Christ? Is Christ's death the great equalizer for those who don't believe in God?

Does the Bible present any other tool that is useful in bringing people to realize they are no better than anyone else? The written law – it is the 10 Commandments that diagnose, that expose the defects, that reveal our shortcomings. And, whether one believes in Jesus or not, if one examines the principles in the law of love every person falls short.

The law exposes our sickness, whereas the death of Christ reveals and provides the Remedy! Those, who have not yet realized their condition find no need of the remedy provided by Christ.

And when we present the law as a list of rules, imposed by a God who is waiting to punish if we disobey, then how does evangelism usually work? But if we present the law as the design protocol upon which life is constructed, and deviations damage the deviant, while God works to heal, then how does evangelism work?

What about how the lesson suggests we seek to win those who are great in the world?

Read second paragraph, "Not so with Jesus..." thoughts?



What about today? What kind of a god appeals to those who prefer the methods of the world?

- Would it be a power over god?
- Would they look for a god who would come to use his power to hurt people?
- March 5, 2006 Louis Farrakhan

We are living at a time that was described by Jesus in these words: “If those days were not shortened for his elect sake, no flesh would be saved.” We know that we have now entered that period when we witnessed a tsunami killing over 200,000 people in Asia; an earthquake in Pakistan; storms raging throughout America, fire on one side, water on the other, snow, cold, ice in between...

At the townhall meeting in New Orleans, I pointed out the high Black-on-Black crime rates, rebellion against the will and law of God, and the love of partying and acting foolishness that prevails in the city. I asked them if they did not think that Allah (God) would handle the city as He did two ancient cities that lived in rebellion. I told them Allah (God) brought a punishment to America, but He also brought a punishment to Black people, and that punishment is going to spread. There will be many more disasters that we are not prepared for in this country.

This country glories in its cities and skyscrapers, but Allah (God) is going to bring them down. We are going to know that He is God. ..

The Bible says that in His Second Coming, He will have a sword dripping with blood in His hand. He is not coming back to teach. He is coming back to kill the enemies of His teaching and set up a new government.

If people prefer the methods of the world to God’s true methods, how do the present justice? Do those who like the methods of the world, like it when we suggest God forgives freely, God pardons without payment?

The ideas of the world have corrupted the church by presenting God’s law like human law, and God like a dictator who inflicts pain and suffering upon the disobedient. This is not restricted to Christianity. Believers of other religions have been corrupted by this same misunderstanding of God’s law. Thus when people believe that God uses force to get His way, they use similar methods. Look at the history of Christianity since Constantine – crusades, inquisitions, burning people at the stake etc.

Is physical violence the only way the methods of the world? What methods of the world are more common? What about coercive pressure, not buying and selling? What about pressuring others what to think? What about intimidation and fear tactics? What about decisions based upon fear?

What about using fear as a mode to get people to accept Jesus? Did Jesus ever use fear?

How do we understand the Old Testament when God thundered at Sinai? Was God using fear? What did Moses say, at that very moment? “there is no need to be afraid.” If God was using fear tactics, then why did Moses tell them they did not need to be afraid?



Could it be God was not using fear tactics, but was intervening to save them from themselves. Rightly understood God was acting in mercy in love, not anger and vengeance.

In chapter three of *Servant God* the question of suffering is explored and what is God's role in it, does He use His power to inflict suffering?

The book points out how Jesus taught that natural disaster were not from God, when answering the question about the tower of Siloam. And this from the book:

Two events in the Bible that are attributed to God – the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – came with much warning and an active rescue effort on God's part to save his children from these disasters. In fact, rather than interpreting these events as God's retributive punishment, the narrative reveals a God who is actively trying to rescue his people from being engulfed by their dark spiritual surroundings. The Bible records instances when God disciplined people to prevent greater harm. What we can be sure of, however, is that God in human form never inflicted physical suffering on anyone. Also significant is that Jesus rebuked his disciples when they wanted to call down fire to destroy rebellious people (Luke 9:54,55). (page 59)

Thoughts?

What about lying? Do those who value the methods of the world lie from their position in the church? What about if a pastor is fired from his job because he wants to present a loving picture of God, but the senior pastor presents a punitive God, and after firing the associate pastor with the loving God picture, the church leadership tells the congregation that the fired pastor "took a call" to another position.

Is this God's methods for dealing with situations? Why do people use such methods?

How can we expect to win people to God's kingdom of love if there is not different in method or function by those proclaiming Christ? In other words, why leave the world with its domination over, coercion, deceit, manipulation, and come into a religion that uses the same methods, albeit while claiming the penalty for such abuses was laid upon Christ and He was punished in our place.

## **SUNDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "Joseph and Mary..." thoughts?

Were Joseph and Mary ordinary or extraordinary?

Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.



Regarding position, wealth, rank, skill-set, perhaps they were ordinary people, but what about regarding character?

How would an ordinary man, in that culture, have reacted to his fiancé being pregnant but not by him?

How would an ordinary woman, in that culture, have reacted to being asked to be pregnant out of wedlock?

And what do you think the character of Mary was that she was chosen to be the human mother of Christ?

Ordinary or extraordinary?

Read last paragraph, “The parents of Jesus...” Thoughts?

Are there any lessons in this paragraph for us?

Where do we draw the line between providing for our children, and providing work for our children?

Do we set character development as the number one goal for ourselves and our children, or do we have other things we put before it, like education, awards, making money, retirement?

Do we experience ourselves and others as successful if they are not wealthy or highly educated?

Do we experience ourselves and others as successful if they are mature and Christlike in character?

Why do education, wealth, position, power too often become the measure of success?

I have patients who fear they are failures because they have lost a job, bankrupted, lost their home, or lost a relationship, break up or divorce.

Are any of these measures of success or failure? Why or why not?

What does God consider to be a successful life? Examples?

- Enoch, Elijah and Moses are obvious
- Daniel and John
- David, Solomon, Manasseh?
- Rahab, Mary Magdalene, and the thief on the cross?
  - How could a murderer, polygamist, idol worshipper who sacrificed his own son, prostitute and thief be successful?
  - Does this mean it doesn't matter what we do as long as we accept Jesus in the end?
  - Think of the Design law, like laws of health. All of these bad deeds are symptoms of hearts that are sick with sin. The disease is raging and destroying their character, some of these individuals were hanging between life and death, eternal life and death, by a



thread, and praise God, as sick as they were when they partook the Remedy, it cured them.

- But wouldn't it have been better to take the Remedy earlier, to avoid so much sickness, pain, suffering and damage to self and others?
- Wouldn't it have been better to have years of influence in promoting the Remedy?
- And wasn't it dangerous to allow the disease of sin to rage? What is the danger? Destroying permanently the faculties that are sensitive to the Spirit of truth and love.
- Caiaphas & Annas? Did they have successful lives? Why or why not? They were High Priests, could anything in that culture be more successful?

What about in our culture today? What does success look like?

- Becoming President of the US?
- Winning the Super Bowl?
- Winning gold at the Olympics?
- Sharing the true picture of God and practicing His methods of love?
- Which do you value more?

What determines if one is successful? Is it not partaking of Jesus Christ, and the sooner one does so, and is reconciled to God and begins practicing God's methods, then the greater good they can achieve with their lives.

The thief on the cross, ultimately succeeded in that he accepted Christ, but he accomplished nothing for the kingdom here on earth. Rahab saved the spies and became a progenitor of Christ...

The sooner we come the Christ, partake the Remedy, and the more consistently we practice His methods, the more impact we have for His kingdom.

## **MONDAY**

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Read third paragraph, "So often..." thoughts

The take away from this is that if we depend on self and not Christ we ultimately fail. Those who depend on Christ however, ultimately succeed.

But there are some big premises in this statement, that "ordinary people" lack self-sufficiency. Really? Aren't many "ordinary" people self-sufficient?

And who is an "ordinary" person? Why is it sometimes difficult to reach those with wealth and power?

Could it be those struggling with financial or health problems have come up against their own limitations and thus look beyond self for help? And could it be those with more means could falsely think they can handle more of life's problems on their own?



What about people in power or with wealth having been conditioned to be skeptical from all the people coming to them with their hands out wanting something, and those with little means, while self-sufficient aren't as jaded because they haven't been approached by as many scams and con men, not to mention the multiplicity of genuine and legitimate charities requesting aid?

So could the "ordinary" be more open and less guarded? Could they also be more vulnerable to flattery, the flattery of being valued and needed?

Read bottom green, "We all tend..." Did Jesus ever become an icon of His time, and people flocked to Him to see a show?

How did Jesus handle this? How should we?

## **TUESDAY**

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The lesson is about Peter and his experiences with Christ, when you think of Peter what lessons do you learn from his life?

Does the history of Peter encourage or discourage you?

Peter was perhaps the most impulsive of the disciples. He would blurt things out, jumped right out of the boat when he saw Jesus, asked Jesus to let him walk on the water, then took his eyes off Jesus and panicked. Sounds like Peter may have had ADHD, couldn't stay focused on one thing for more than a minute.

But, what was necessary for Peter to become effective for Jesus?

What did Peter tell Jesus when Jesus said all would run away and leave him?

Peter declared he wouldn't, was Peter lying to Jesus? Could Jesus trust Peter?

How can it be that Peter was not lying, yet he was also not being truthful?

Did Peter love Jesus? Did he want to stay and be loyal to Jesus? But what happened that prevented this?

Did Peter still love himself more than Jesus? Was survival of the fittest still the ruling agency in Peter's character? Thus, while he loved Jesus, he still hadn't died to self and totally surrendered to Christ. This is why he along with the others, were arguing about who would be greater in heaven just before the Last Supper.

But what changed after Peter's denial of Christ? Did Jesus change? Did God change? Did Peter's legal status change?



Peter had a change of heart, he loathed the selfishness and fear in his heart and realized he could not fix it, thus he finally surrendered all to Jesus.

This is what caused Peter to go from ordinary to extraordinary!

## WEDNESDAY

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Read MT 6:25-30:

<sup>5</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

<sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Thoughts?

Do we worry? About what do we worry?

What of Christ’s question, who can add a single day to his life by worrying?

In fact, worrying shortens the life, by activating inflammatory cascades, which damage the body and increases disease.

Does worry solve any problem? Does worry increase faith, trust, peace?

Do you notice most of the things we worry about are things that are not our responsibility?

- What others think of us – we are not responsible for what others think, we are responsible for what we think and how we act
- Whether we are liked – we are not responsible for whether others like us, we are responsible for whether we are like Christ
- How our children turn out – we are not responsible for how they turn out, we are responsible for our conduct in parenting
- Whether we get into a certain school, or hired for a certain job, we are not responsible for whether we get in or hired, we are responsible for preparing ourselves, applying and presenting ourselves in the most favorable way



- Whether a sickness gets cured in us or a loved one, we are not responsible for how a sickness turns out, but for living in harmony with God's methods and principles for health and doing all in our power to bring healing.

We worry because we take outcomes upon ourselves and try to force events to go the way we want, rather than focusing on fulfilling our responsibilities in governance of ourselves, in any given situation, and trusting God with how things turn out.

What about our worth? Where does our worth originate?

Does sin change a person's worth?

If a person murders is their worth affected?

If they commit adultery?

If a person is abused by their parents is their worth affected?

If a person is rejected and divorced is their worth affected?

If a church disfellowships someone is their worth affected?

If a person rejects God is their worth affected?

In other words, are the lost, those who reject Jesus, worth less than those who accept Him?

What determines our worth? From where does it originate?

Our actions for good or evil cannot change our worth, but our actions can change our health. Our physical, mental, relational and spiritual health are all affected by our choices and actions, but not our worth.

## **THURSDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "Perhaps the most..." thoughts?

This confused me a little, when it suggested no class distinctions, didn't they still have slaves in Bible times, amongst the Christians? Did women have equality in the early church?

Why did these disparities exist in the early church? Was it because slavery and bigotry were part of Christianity, or were these issues part of the culture upon which Christianity grew? Was Christianity supposed to incorporate slavery and bigotry or rise above it?

How has Christianity done?

Did the early church have women pastors? Why not?

- Because it violates God's will?
- Because people were biased by culture and were not yet enlightened, including Bible writers?





- Because elevating women would have offended the unconverted and thus closed the minds of people to the gospel before they even had a chance to hear it?
- Or could it have been that in that culture women in religious circles were held in high esteem as cult priestesses and prostitutes and Christianity wanted to distinguish itself from these perverse religions, thus they relegated women to non-leadership roles for the purpose of making the chastity of Christian values understood to those outside the church?
- And the Christian women were gracious enough to be like Jesus who did not think equality with God was something to be grasped but humbled himself into the form of a servant.

Do we have struggles with class distinctions in Christianity today?

- Are women treated as equals in Christianity?
- Should they be?

What about black conferences rather than integrated conferences?

How do we find the unity in Christ with the beauty of the plurality of divergence?

How do we present our unique culture in ways that win rather than offend others?

How can culture become an obstacle to the gospel message?

Do we have doctrinal class distinction – i.e. those who hold to certain tenants are considered more orthodox and thus superior to those who don't?

Do we have educational class distinction, those with greater degrees, doctors etc, or certain degrees, theology degrees, are esteemed higher and given more credence?

## **FRIDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “In this closing...” thoughts?

What were the qualifications Christ looked for in His disciples?

Discuss questions 1, 2