



Discipleship Lesson 12 1Q 2014

The Harvest and the Harvesters

We continue to receive numerous emails each week. Here is one from the many that came in this week that I thought fit well with this week's lesson (emphasis by author of email):

*I thought that you might find it interesting that **I am listening to your Sabbath School discussions and making an attempt to bring those concepts and discussions to my Sabbath School class of 11 and 12 year olds.** The lessons that are in the quarterly for them do not seem to hold their attention, much.*

I am finding that they do not have a problem becoming engaged in thought when we study about the character of God, and even how we are to behave and disciple others when we understand a bit about that character. I believe that this is crucial for their spiritual development that we help them find as many answers as possible to their questions in a way that makes sense and gets them to examine their own beliefs and how it affects their interactions with people and with their God.

As you can imagine, some of these children have been schooled very well in "Adventist doctrine", and they can spout out pat answers with the best of them. But now, when certain concepts or questions are put to them, they have to put some energy into their answers. We sit at a round table so that each child feels equal and has an equal chance to be heard. It is great to see the wheels turning.

Even the boy who supposedly has a hyperactivity disorder sits there and interacts as a normal kid raising some pretty thought-provoking questions, himself.

I have asked them whether our discussions help them to have a better understanding of why there is a struggle for our race, and why there is a controversy about God at all, and they all invariable answer with a relieved, "Yes!"

These children are now even asking that we pray that some of the adults they know will come to understand God as the benevolent Father, and not the angry judge that their parents fear.

***I feel that this needs to be brought to our children.** I sense that if more children had had this sort of presentation of the reasons why Christ died, and all that it represents, rather than the angry God seeking blood to pay for sins routine, we probably would have retained far more children in this church than we have. Jesus becomes more relevant, and so does His Father become more real to us when they are presented with this integrated approach.*

*There are several of us in [our] church that have **wondered whether we could do a bible study for the adults, using your seminars that are on line.** We want to get your permission that this*



is acceptable to you.

*I also just have to tell you that **there is a preacher's wife from the local Pentecostal church who has a women's bible study, and who has benefited greatly** by listening to and sharing your DVD on God and the Brain, which my husband gave to her just a few weeks ago. We are delighted, and so are they.*

I just had an emergency patient, today, (I have no idea of her religion) with whom I fell into a conversation about why there were so many wars in the Old Testament and not in the New. I proposed the idea to her that I had learned from Dr. Jennings, which makes perfectly good sense. She literally "lit up" with understanding and a new concept of the love of God. She said she got "goose bumps" just thinking about how God loves us that much! We talked about this longer than it took me to take care of her emergency procedure! I gave her a "God and Your Brain" DVD that I had in my car and just told her to pass it forward when she was done. She said she would.

This is a healing message, and I feel privileged to pass it along.

Happy us, that we have such a God!

For those who want to present this material, on the God and Your Brain DVD set we have included PDF files with the entire slide deck so you can use them and present them yourself. So if you have one of the DVD sets, then you have the slides. Please be encouraged to go and share!

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "In many respects..." How would you describe the kingdom of God? What are the methods God uses to promote His kingdom?

I just love this description of God's methods:

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love;** and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. **God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** {DA 759.1}

Thoughts? Do you agree? Or do you think God does use coercive power, threats, intimidation and inflicted death to win the war?

Why can God NOT win the war by the use of physical power? What does a win look like for God? Intelligent beings love and trust Him completely and therefore live in harmony with His design for life. Can love and trust be obtained through force?



So how do we take the principles of truth, love, mercy, goodness and put them into practical application?

How many of those who teach a god who is punitive, one who must inflict torture, would argue with this? In other words, how many would say God is not a God of truth, love, mercy or goodness? The lie about God isn't between the God of love and a god who is merely power and unforgiveness etc. The lie is when they continue to promote the idea that God is love, truth, mercy and goodness, but then add things like He is also just, and then define justice as human justice of inflicted torment, rather than Godly justice of love and freedom.

This is the rub, many of those who are teaching a theology that misrepresents God don't even know it. This is why Jesus said,

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' MT 7:22,23

How is it people could dedicate their lives to sharing the gospel, yet be God's enemies?

What would constitute being an enemy of God? Would it not be persons who work against God's methods, principles, character, motives? Would it not be people who misrepresent Him and infect minds with lies about Him that undermine trust, whether the person realizes it or not?

Were the leaders of the Jewish religious system 2000 years ago enemies of God? Did they think they were?

Consider the problem we have with the conflict between Christians and Muslims, how did this happen?

Prior to Constantine, Christians met in homes, lived communally, shared to help each other, refused to war against others, perhaps the closest example of this today would be the Amish.

After Constantine converted, the church changed. It stopped meeting in homes and began meeting in large public buildings, which had been pagan places of worship. We were in Rome a couple of years ago and essentially all the Christian cathedrals had been pagan places of worship and still had statues of many of the Roman gods. Christianity became infected with many pagan beliefs and ideas, but the most pernicious change happened when God's law of love was replaced with the imperial Roman concept of law, imposed rules; and God was seen as a cosmic dictator.

Some have argued that Mohammad was the first protestant – protesting much of this distortion about God. As a result of this change in God's law, from love to imposed rules requiring imposed punishment, Christians didn't go to the Muslims with a message of love, compassion, grace, forgiveness, seeking to love them, but instead sent soldiers to massacre them.



What view of the Christian God do you think the crusaders planted in the minds of Muslims?

Are we any better today? How many Christians would give their lives for a Muslim? Did our leader – Jesus give His life for Muslims? Of course He did!

Do you think history might be different had Christians gone to Muslims with a message of love?

What could we do to insulate, protect, insure we do not find ourselves as one of God's enemies?

If we want to share God's message, using God's principles, might it be helpful to learn of God the way Jesus did when He was a boy? I found this description in a book called *The Story of Jesus*, written over 100 years ago:

Jesus did not go to these schools, for they taught many things that were not true. Instead of God's Word, the sayings of men were studied, and often these were contrary to that which God had taught through His prophets. {The Story of Jesus 30.4}

God Himself by His Holy Spirit instructed Mary how to bring up His Son. Mary taught Jesus from the **Holy Scriptures, and He learned to read and study them for Himself.** {SJ 30.5}

Jesus also loved to study the wonderful things which God had made, in the earth and in the sky. In this book of nature He saw the trees and plants and animals, and the sun and the stars. {SJ 30.6}

Day by day He watched them, and tried to learn lessons from them, **and to understand the reason of things.** {SJ 30.7}

Holy angels were with Him, and helped Him to learn from these things about God. Thus, as He grew in height and strength, He grew also in knowledge and wisdom. {SJ 30.8}

Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. We should spend our time in learning only that which is true. Falsehood and fables will do us no good. {SJ 30.9}

Only the truth is of any value, and this we may learn from God's Word and from His works. As we study these things the angels will help us to understand. {SJ 31.1}

What method, according to this author, did Jesus use? The integrative evidence based approach. Notice Jesus learned from God's word, Jesus learned from nature and Jesus studied to know the "reasons" for things.

Do we have any evidence from Scripture to support this conclusion? Yes, the life of Jesus and His methods of teaching. Jesus quoted Scripture, Jesus used lessons from science and nature, and Jesus appealed to their experience.



We can learn as Jesus did, IF, we are willing to open our minds to all the threads of evidence God has given, think for ourselves, and REJECT the false ideas put forward by men that have infected our schools and churches.

Why do so many end up Jesus' enemies in the end? Because they have theologies based on what they think Scripture teaches, beliefs that operate contrary to God's laws in nature and science, and are inconsistent with experience and often unreasonable.

They haven't found the truth, the truth of God's character and design that is the very building blocks upon which reality is constructed. When we find this truth we have real wisdom, real understanding and real harmony with God. And Jesus is the source of this truth as He is the inspiring source for Scripture, the Creator/Designer and the Redeemer.

Thoughts?

The second paragraph states, "Whenever proselytizing displaces repentance, conversion, and spiritual transformation, the mission falters."

I couldn't agree more, well said. Do you think your church leadership would support a series of meetings designed to bring people to the truth about God's character of love, His methods of running the universe, His principles of goodness, mercy and truth, which teach how deviations from God's design are actually destructive, while harmony with God's design is healing (in other words the reason for things), call people to Jesus and harmony with His kingdom, offering baptism into Jesus Christ for those who desire it, but not merely focus on a list of fundamental beliefs or doctrines that one can hold to without actually know God? An evangelistic series focusing on people coming to a healing and transforming experience with God, without requiring a specific denominational affiliation?

Would you like to participate with such an endeavor?

When the Apostles preached they preached Christ, and argued against sects or denominations. In the end, when Jesus returns, how many groups will their be?

Two – and how would you describe those two groups?

- Sheep and goats
- Wheat and tares
- Pure woman and harlot
- Fruitful vine and withered vine
- Saved and lost

And what is it that is the demarcating factor amongst these two groups?

Will it be?

- The method of ritual baptism (immersion vs. sprinkling)?
- Which day one holds sacred?



- What food one eats?
- What clothing or jewelry one wears?
- How one takes communion?
- What one believes about the state of the dead?
- Whether one identifies correctly the king of the north?
- Whether one has the right idea regarding the trinity?
- Whether one has said the sinners prayer?
- Whether one has claimed the blood of Jesus for their sins or not?

What is it that will be the consistent, common, non-negotiable difference between the saved and the lost?

- Character transformation – actually partaking the divine nature, so it is no longer our selfish nature we live by but we have died to self and have been renewed in heart with new motives of love, thus it is Christ living in us.
- The saved will love God and others more than self; they will love the truth and long to grow in it every day, while the lost will love self and reject truth preferring their long held ideas and beliefs.

And how is it possible for any descendant of Adam to experience this change from fear and selfishness to love and trust? Only through the accomplishments of Jesus – He is the way and means of restoration of rightness within us.

Thoughts?

SUNDAY

First paragraph points out that the disciples were to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit before they went out to present the gospel. Then it states, “God could have commissioned angels, unassisted by human beings, to broadcast the gospel. Instead, He elected to appoint sinful, erring, unpredictable humans for this sacred calling.” Thoughts?

Does God have reasons for what He does? Has He invited us to, as far as we are able, understand His methods and reasons? (Jn 15:15)

What reason, might God have, for using sinful humans to take the gospel to the world and not unfallen angels?

- For the character development and healing of those taking the message
- To be able to identify with and share a common experience of the pain and despair of sin and the healing found in Christ
- Because God wants conversion, not submission – what would likely happen if an angel appeared with a message?
 - Would people, in general, be as critical?



- Would they be more vulnerable to accepting what is presented without thinking, without reasoning, without investigation?
- And then what happens to the character when we believe things based on someone else's authority, but not actual understanding and agreement? Our development is stunted, our ability to think is impaired, our ability to grow to the full stature of men and women that God designs for us to be is undermined.
- Thus, for the healing and recovery of our God-given capacities, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." 1Cor 1:27

Thoughts?

Read bottom paragraph, "How many of God's..." This is an excellent point. Just because you have never spoken to large crowds doesn't mean your sharing of the gospel won't impact many people. Consider:

- The woman with two mites
- Mary Magdalene
- Marian and Barbie Fisher
- The person who shared the gospel with Billy Graham, whether his parents, Sunday School Teacher, coach or whomever

But regardless of our sharing of the gospel – it only grows in hearts that are receptive under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

We are not responsible for converting anyone. We are responsible for being open to the work of the Spirit in our lives, for living in harmony with God's design, for studying to understand God's character, methods, and principles to the best of our ability, and for sharing what we know to the best of our ability to others.

We are never responsible for how others respond. Look at how they treated Jesus, was He crucified because He did a poor job of presenting the gospel? Of course not! Likewise, when you find a local pastor, elder, church board, conference committee etc. rejecting you, don't get discouraged or immediately conclude that you have failed, or not presented it right. No, we are responsible for presenting the gospel, the Holy Spirit enlightens and convicts, and others choose how they will respond.

How do we share the gospel?

My mother forwarded an email she recently received. Last year my mother went to the beach in Florida, while there she got to talking to a lady she met there and told her about the God we love and then, as a proud mom, about my book *The God-Shaped Brain*. She received this email a couple of weeks ago:



I just went to San Francisco and Napa with my husband. I tagged along on a business trip and guess what book I read while I was there – THE GOD SHAPED BRAIN! It is such a great book my husband is reading it now and I want my kids to read it. God has really been doing something in me and healing me from wrong thoughts that I didn't even know I had... I know He used you on the beach that day to tell me about your son's book. I even bought it for a friend of mine who is going thru a really bad divorce. Let me know if he ever comes to Florida to do a conference. It is such a powerful message and I have had many of the same beliefs that he talks about in the book and I could recognize many of the wrong thought processes I have had too. This has been such a difficult season of my life but I know that God has used this book to transform my thoughts. I am ready to move into the next season.

I will keep you and your family in my prayers. Especially Tim because this book can bring such freedom I know the enemy will be on the prowl. Please tell him I said Thank You for writing it.

Do we have to be preachers to share the gospel? My mother chose to share my book, but it doesn't have to be my book that is shared. Share a resource that has been meaningful to you and which you believe will be helpful to the person with whom you are speaking.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Through discourse and example..." Why did Jesus, since He was the Son of God and not only man but fully divine, have to have complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit?

What is the problem with the theology that says Jesus won His victory by the exercise of His divine nature?

Did Jesus win by relying on a power that is unavailable to us? Or did Jesus win His victory by relying on the same power that is available to us?

So, first reason, His victory was through the same resources available to us.

Second reason, "He was tempted in every way just as we are yet without sin" Heb 2:14. What does this mean? That Jesus' victory was achieved via the exercise of His human brain, not His divine self. This is hugely significant – why?

Why was it necessary that Christ achieve the victory by the exercise of His human brain, relying upon the Holy Spirit, rather than via the exercise of His divine power?

- The only way to fix what was broken in the human species was by replacing the law of sin and death with God's law perfectly restored into the heart, mind and being of the human creation. This could only happen by a human being, descended from Adam choosing to live a perfect life via the exercise of human brain. Any other being – angel, beings from other planets etc. would not fix what was broken in humankind.



- Further – it demonstrated that there was no manufacturer’s defect. God did not make Adam and Eve with some inherent flaw such that they were incapable of living in harmony with God’s design.
- Further – He did this with the same resources available to us – He had no advantage, thus through those resources we can experience freedom from the domination and control (NOT the temptation) of fear and selfishness.
- But because He was also fully divine, He had a level of temptation we never have to face – using divine power to advantage self. And because He was fully divine we also learn, by revelation of His conduct, God’s true character and How God wields power. Satan’s argument has always been that God is selfish. His temptations upon Christ were targeted to get Him to use divine power for selfish purposes, thus confirming Satan’s allegations. Jesus destroyed Satan’s lies by never exercising divine power for self.

Read green section at bottom, “How can our anxious...” Anyone want to share what helps them deal with anxiety, restlessness, uncertainty?

- Spend time with God, know Him and His methods
- Trust Him with outcomes
- Allow for possibilities beyond your awareness
- Remember history – we have nothing to fear for the future save we forget how God has led in the past.
- Examine one’s thoughts and replace any distortions or lies with truth
- Forgive if haven’t forgiven
- Repent if haven’t repented
- Lies, unforgiveness and unrepentance all disrupt the salience network and cause ruminating loops of anxiety and negative thinking
- Take focus off self and seek to help others – not to get their love and approval of you, but for the genuine good of others

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs, “Peter had expressed...” What are the keys to God’s kingdom?

The words of Christ – meaning what? The truth, reality. The keys to the kingdom of God is reality itself. God is Creator, Builder, Designer – and the key to being part of that kingdom is being in harmony with that kingdom. That requires, we who are deviant, to understand our condition, understand His true character and nature, trust Him for His regenerating Spirit, and choose with the power we have to live, as far as possible, in harmony with His design.

Or, are the keys to the kingdom some institutional authority to grant absolution from sin, condemn to eternal destruction, carry out various ordinances and sacraments? Are the keys of the kingdom found in secret rites, special words or incantations, such as “I baptize you in the name of...” Or are the keys knowing the reality of God’s nature and being? (JN 17:3)



Read last two paragraphs, “Sometimes human leadership...” How is it some seek to subjugate the thoughts, God-given creativity and individuality of others?

Where do we find the balance between leaving others free and engaging in spiritual warfare, as Christ said He did not bring peace but a sword?

Our responsibility is always in governance of self, while leaving others free to choose for themselves. We must also use discernment and wisdom as to where and when we present the truths we love. Jesus counseled not to cast our pearls before swine.

There are some individuals who are not interested in the truth and only interested in seeking some pretext to criticize and attack. A few years ago a pastor came to me and spoke to me asking me what I believe. He presented himself as having sincere interest in understanding our views. But immediately after our conversation went online and twisted what I said and accused me of being a heretic.

How do we deal with such people?

If we use Christ as an example He didn't seek to focus His work on evangelizing religious leaders. When they came to Him He sought to reveal to them the corruption of their motives and hearts through nature, parable, direct testimony and questioning them.

WEDNESDAY

Read top dark section, “But when he saw...” Many of us have been praying this prayer for several years, and God has been answering this as more and more people are sharing this message in their communities.

The lesson goes on to ask how can we find the balance between ministering to the needs of those in the church, while not neglecting evangelism?

What is the purpose of evangelism?

- To indoctrinate to believe certain tenants?
- To convert people to loyalty and membership in certain organizations?
- To lead people to the truth about God and His kingdom such that they freely choose to invite Him into their hearts and live in harmony with His design?

If the third is our goal in evangelism is there any synergy with our ministry to those in the church?

Would it not be an ever increasing unfolding of the truth about God and His character of love and continual growth in our ability to apply His methods to our lives?



Is the church itself not strengthened by outreach? Do we not grow as we share this truth to others? So wouldn't one of the best ways to help the church grow be in helping people learn how to use all their unique experiences to witness God's kingdom?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "Through teaching and personal example..." What do you think about how the lesson suggests Jesus' comments of the prostitutes and tax collectors as being "lost" is a nice way to say sinner?

Was it that, or was Jesus describing reality? They were lost – they were lonely, empty, confused, they didn't have peace inside and the religious system treated them as outcasts without hope – they didn't know where to go or what to do. They didn't understand God's character nor His methods or design for life. And thus they sought to fill the emptiness of soul with worldly things. They were actually lost.

But what about the condition of the church leaders in Christ's day? Were they not even more lost? Why? Because the prostitutes knew they were lost and knew they needed a way out, but couldn't find it without Jesus, but the Pharisees though lost didn't know it, they thought they were actually standing in the light.

In the third paragraph the lesson quotes from a book entitled Christ's Object Lessons: "When you see yourself as a sinner saved only by the love of your heavenly Father, you will have tender pity for others who are suffering in sin. You will no longer meet misery and repentance with jealousy and censure. When the ice of selfishness is melted from your hearts, you will be in sympathy with God, and will share His joy in the saving of the lost."

Thoughts?

Did you notice this author suggests we need to realize we are saved by the love of God, and in this knowledge we experience melting of the selfish heart and have sympathy with God.

Could it be that presenting salvation as being not from the love of God, but from the selfless love of Jesus, who paid a legal penalty to His Father to turn away God's wrath, that we obstruct God's healing plan, we increase fear and selfishness and we fail to experience unity with God?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-4