# Contents

1. **An Overview of Discipleship**—December 29–January 4 ————5
2. **Discipleship Then and Now**—January 5–11 ————17
3. **Called to Discipleship by Jesus**—January 12–18 ————29
4. **Lessons From Would-be Disciples**—January 19–25 ————41
5. **Gender and Discipleship**—January 26–February 1 ————53
6. **Ethnicity and Discipleship**—February 2–8 ————65
7. **Preparation for Discipleship**—February 9–15 ————77
8. **Experiencing Discipleship**—February 16–22 ————89
9. **Following the Master: Discipleship in Action**—February 23–29 ————101
10. **Discipleship Under Pressure**—March 1–7 ————113
11. **More Lessons in Discipleship**—March 8–14 ————125
12. **Mission and Commission**—March 15–21 ————137
13. **Patterns of Discipleship**—March 22–28 ————149

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Though discipleship has been a topic of interest to Christians for centuries, for the first followers of Jesus discipleship was so much more than just that. For them, discipleship was the experience of following the Lord Jesus. At its core, discipleship was a relationship; one that was transforming, liberating, and empowering. And, as it was for them, so must it be for us.

A disciple is a person who has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, committed himself or herself to a growing relationship with God, and by the Holy Spirit is integrating the Lordship of Jesus into every area of daily life. Disciples are committed to being responsible members of the church through active and consistent participation in mission, and they are moved by the internal motivation of God’s Spirit.

Discipleship can be viewed from varying perspectives. First, it can be examined with respect to the historical situation in which the Master and His disciples interacted. Second, it can be judged from the viewpoint of the nature of the Christian life. In order for us to grasp the character and meaning of Christian discipleship, both these approaches must be captured.

The theme Christian discipleship implies a discipleship different from others. Though the first century had many disciple-gathering teachers who were revered and whose styles of instruction were venerated, Christian discipleship speaks to a specific mode of discipleship. Because a Christian is an imitator of Jesus, and because a disciple is a follower, Christian discipleship is, then, the kind of discipleship that involves following, even imitating, Jesus.

Discipleship also can be viewed from two different levels: (1) that of the first disciples of Jesus and (2) that of His subsequent ones.

When one thinks of discipleship as it relates to Jesus and His followers, several questions arise. What must it have been like to have Jesus call, teach, and train you for discipleship? What must it have
been like to watch Jesus in action and to learn from His example?

On the other hand, and in some ways more relevant to us now, what does discipleship entail for Christians living so many centuries removed from the time when Jesus lived and taught? What does discipleship entail for Christ’s disciples in the twenty-first century? What does discipleship involve for people who live in a society radically different from where Jesus and His first disciples lived?

In this quarter’s Bible study guide, we will look at discipleship as an experience between Jesus and those He called to apprenticeship with Him. We will explore what is involved in discipleship and who is truly a disciple. We will also examine the process of becoming a disciple and the major characteristics of discipleship. We will compare Jesus’ discipleship with that of other disciple-gathering teachers. Additionally, we will look at such topics as would-be disciples, gender and discipleship, ethnicity and discipleship, instructions for discipleship, and discipleship under pressure. In short, we will consider what we need to be modern-day disciples living in what we believe is close to the second coming of Jesus.

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How to Use
This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Practice, and Apply

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, practice, and apply. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Practice); and

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in the “The Lesson in Brief . . .” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Practice: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Apply: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 4:18–22; 10:24, 25; Mark 3:13, 14; 8:34, 35; Luke 14:25, 26.

Memory Text: “As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people’” (Matthew 4:18, 19, NRSV).

Dwight E. Stevenson tells a story from the days of the conquistadors that illustrates an important aspect of discipleship. “When Cortez disembarked his five hundred conquistadors upon the eastern coast of Mexico, he set fire to the ships.”—Charles L. Wallis, ed., Speaker’s Illustrations for Special Days (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 25. As his warriors watched their means of retreat go up in flames, they knew that they were committing their lives to the conquest of the New World for Spain. They had to be totally dedicated to the mission.

In the same way, those who accept Christ and commit to the task of discipleship are called to burn their ships in the harbor. There is no room for retreat. There is no turning back. The motto of this complete surrender to Christ should be “forward ever, backward never.”

The Week at a Glance: What is discipleship? Who is a disciple? Can one volunteer to be a disciple? What are the requirements of discipleship? What is the essence of discipleship?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 5.
Discipleship—Historical and Personal

In Scripture, the concept of discipleship appears in two ways, historical and personal.

In the historical Christian context it refers to the interaction between Christ, the Master Teacher, and His first followers, known as the disciples. At the core, it referred to those who had a close and special affiliation with the Rabbi from Nazareth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

On the personal level, discipleship refers to the encounter that occurs between Christ, the transformed individual, and the world. It refers also to the challenges that Christian commitment brings and to the resultant life of faith. Thus, discipleship involves not only what a Christian does on behalf of Christ but how Christ is represented in the world.

It is here that the two aspects of discipleship, historical and personal, can intersect. Modern discipleship can benefit from the insights offered by the experience of the historical disciples and the Master.

Outline the concepts of discipleship found in Matthew 4:18–22.

What did Jesus ask Peter and Andrew to do? Compare the call extended to James and John with that given to Peter and Andrew. What light does the response of these four disciples shed on our understanding of discipleship? See also John 1:40–42. What do these passages teach us, as well?

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Read Acts 11:26. What insights does this give to us about the meaning of discipleship?

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From what you have seen so far, what is your understanding of discipleship? What personal lessons can you take away from the few texts looked at today?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Matthew 4:18–22

The Student Will:
Know: Describe what disciples are and how we become Christ’s.
Feel: Sense a desire to commit unreservedly to Jesus.
Do: Determine to make a commitment to draw others to Him.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: The Master’s Calling
   A Peter and Andrew cast their nets in the sea one moment then abandoned their boats the next. Why did they respond so immediately to Jesus’ call? What does that reveal about becoming disciples?
   B Disciple comes from the Greek word mathetes, a “learner” apprenticed to a teacher for receiving instruction. One becomes a disciple by answering a call. Who initiates it? How is our response to grace at work?
   C Why did Jesus call Peter while he worked? Why might Peter need to be confronted with all he was giving up?

II. Feel: Burning Our Boats
   A Sabbath’s study tells how Cortez burned his ships after landing in Mexico. How have we had to break with the past, or “burn our ships,” to serve Christ fully?
   B Looking at the call of the first disciples, what does the apprenticeship of modern disciples consist of?
   C Christ chose—or called—His early disciples. In what sense does He choose—or call—us?

III. Do: Carrying Out Our Calling
   A Why answer Jesus’ call, given that a disciple’s life may be difficult?
   B How does Jesus motivate us to grow in discipleship with Him? What are the rewards?
   C Jesus called Andrew; Andrew called Peter. Disciples make disciples. How do we call others to Him?

Summary: Discipleship is an intimate relationship between Jesus and His followers.
Who Is a Disciple?

The word *disciple* comes from the Greek word *mathetes*, meaning “learner,” “apprentice,” or “adherent.” It depicts a person whose mind is set on a purpose. In the New Testament, it is used mostly of Jesus’ disciples, especially in the Gospels. It refers to “an apprentice or pupil attached to a teacher or movement; one whose allegiance is to the instruction and commitments of the teacher or movement.”—Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1985), p. 222. A disciple, then, is a pupil or learner who is apprenticed to a master or teacher for the purpose of receiving instruction. There can be no disciple without a teacher. The New Testament term *disciple* is used primarily of Jesus’ disciples.

**Discipleship** involves willingness to follow commands and to make commitments. What does Jesus mean, and what is He calling for, in His statement to the crowds, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:25, 26, NASB)? How are these words applied to us in our daily life?

If Christians are disciples, to whom are modern Christians apprenticed? Who should have the allegiance and commitment of Christians? The church? The doctrines? A charismatic preacher who does a good job of teaching and instructing? Or Jesus? What light does 1 Corinthians 1:10–17, especially verse 12, shed on this matter?

In the New Testament, a disciple was one whom Jesus taught and who was committed to following Him. Is it any different today? Read again Jesus’ words in Luke, as quoted above. How well does that picture fit you? Are you truly a disciple of Christ? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your commitment to the Lord?
Learning Cycle

►STEP 1—Motivate!

Key Concept: Those who accept Christ and commit to the task of discipleship are called to surrender completely to Him.

It seems you can’t watch the news without hearing about war. You may know someone who has lost a child in combat. When we consider such sacrifice, how does surrender make us react?

For some, surrender is worse than death, as history shows.

In A.D. 70, Lucius Flavius Silva marched the Roman Tenth Legion into the Judean Desert. His orders: Quell the Sicarii—the last Jews resistant to Rome. General Silva laid a long, fierce siege to the Sicarii stronghold of Masada, his message ominously clear. None would escape alive.

When the Tenth Legion stepped into the fortress, they heard only silence. They shouted to their enemies to show themselves. Two women climbed out of a cistern and told a gruesome tale. Ten men had been chosen by lot to murder everyone in the fortress. Of the ten, one was chosen to slay the other nine, set fire to the palace, then kill himself. The Romans listened in disbelief. But when they found the 953 dead bodies, they couldn’t exult. The fortress’s well-stocked storehouses sent a clear message. The Sicarii had not killed themselves because they were starving and wanted to avoid the shame of eating their children. They killed themselves to avoid being taken as prisoners. The Romans could only marvel at the courage of their enemies who would rather die than surrender.

Consider This: Many dictionaries define surrender as “to give oneself up, as to an enemy.” Yet, Jesus is our Friend. So, why would such a severe word be necessary to describe what we must do to serve Him? Explore how we, who are the enemies of Christ, must be brought into a right relationship with Him through grace. Review the story of Masada for insights. What did the Sicarii fear they would lose if they surrendered? How does this help us understand what Christ asks us to surrender to follow Him?

►STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. Leaving Our Boats (Review Matthew 4:18–20 with your class.)

Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee on an important mission. For two
How Does One Become a Disciple?

**Read** Mark 1:19, 20 *(see also Matt. 4:18, 19).* What do these texts tell us about how people became followers of Jesus?

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In most instances in the New Testament, disciples were chosen; that is, they were called by the Lord, and they responded to the call. In other words, one doesn’t make oneself a disciple. Instead, one becomes a disciple by responding to a call.

**What** do the following texts say about this topic?

*Mark 2:13, 14*

____________________________________________________________________

*Mark 3:13, 14*

____________________________________________________________________

*Luke 5:8–11*

____________________________________________________________________

*John 1:43*

____________________________________________________________________

*Acts 9:4–6*

____________________________________________________________________

These texts show that the initiative for discipleship in the historical situation did not rest with an individual. It resided with the Master. Each disciple responded to a call the Lord extended.

Even the response to the call Jesus extended did not wholly reside with the called. This, too, involved a divine initiative. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” *(John 6:44, NIV)*. Discipleship indeed is a work of grace. God provided the means of salvation. He extends the call for us, and He woos us to accept. Can anyone doubt that salvation is all of grace?

The fact that you are even reading these words indicates the work of God in your life. How have you responded to the call of the Master? How do your works reveal the answer?
years He had preached but had not chosen anyone to work directly with Him. Now it was time to call those to Him whom He could train and entrust with the most important work the world has ever been given. Surely Jerusalem, home of Israel’s elite, would have been the ideal place to look for candidates for the Twelve.

Jesus stopped and looked out across the water where Peter and his brother Andrew cast nets. The sea of Galilee was known for its sudden and violent storms. The men who fished there, to some extent, had taken on the characteristics of the water itself—generous and strong but also given to fierce temper and outbursts; unstable as a rocking boat, rough as the wind, and unpredictable.

Andrew had been a follower of John the Baptist. He and Peter had been “part-time” followers of Jesus for the past two years. During this time, Jesus had been sizing them up for a promotion: Soon their nets would be useless for catching the kind of “fish” Jesus had in mind.

**Consider This:** What can we learn from Peter and Andrew’s response to Jesus’ call? Did they hesitate or ask Him for time to think it over, saying they’d get back to Him in a few days? How does this teach us to respond to Jesus’ call? How is Jesus’ call not just a call to faith but a call to action?

- *Whom does Jesus call? Why did He pass over the intellectual elite for these rough-spoken men of little education or standing? What does that tell us about whom He can use? What hope does that give us?*

II. The Sons of Thunder and the Prince of Peace (*Review Matthew 4:21, 22 with your class.*)

Jesus continued His walk by the water. He saw two brothers in a boat with their father mending nets. James and John, along with Zebedee, were in a business partnership with Peter. The nets they were mending could have been dragnets used by fishermen on Galilee for deep-sea fishing. The net would be spread out in the water and then the two ends pulled together to trap the fish. Men who knew how to cast a net like this knew how to get results; they knew the patience of waiting for their quarry; and they knew how to ensnare—what great qualities to have on a résumé of those in training to catch souls for heaven.

But any human resource director in Jerusalem, who might have been given their résumés to look at for the position of disciple, might find reasons to caution Jesus from hiring them. James and John were called “the
Requirements of Discipleship

From our study thus far, we can discern a few conditions for discipleship.

First, discipleship in the New Testament began with Jesus’ call to people to follow Him. A response from those called was essential. Thus, willingness to follow must have been a requirement of discipleship.

Second, willingness had to be based on something concrete, on something the disciple saw as valuable. Did those called discern something in Jesus they had not previously seen in anyone else? If so, they exercised faith in Him to follow willingly.

The third requirement of discipleship is a natural outgrowth of the first two. Willingness to follow and faith to believe must have led to a positive response to His call to discipleship. Without a positive response there could be no discipleship.

A positive response and willingness to follow are ineffective unless put into active reality through obedience. Jesus invited each person initially called to follow Him, and they did so immediately. This means that they were obedient and that obedience was a requirement for discipleship. No willfully disobedient person can be a successful follower of the Master.

Also, in the case of the disciples, their response to the call implied a total break with the past. They left their jobs, their families, and their possessions to follow Jesus, and they heeded the call to love these things less than they loved the Master. Being a disciple doesn’t necessarily mean that we have to do all those things, only that we be willing to, if needed.

What other requirements of discipleship can you find in the following texts? Matt. 16:24, 25; Mark 8:34, 35; Luke 9:23. What is the basic message that Jesus is giving to us here? How can you apply this principle in your own life?

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sons of thunder”—by Jesus Himself. Not a very promising start for two men who were going to work for the One known as the Prince of Peace. If anything, such a name conjures association of storms and hail and lightning, the latter being a comparison, in Jesus’ own words for Lucifer. “‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’” Could Jesus really be serious when He told men like this to follow Him?

**Consider This:** Why would Jesus call such outwardly “unpromising” men? How does their response help us understand why Jesus called them? What does this tell us about how Jesus views qualifications for service? How does this help us define who a disciple is?

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**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Thought Questions:**

1. Christ’s calling is a divine initiative that begins with Him. This calling inspires a vision of the future in which we learn from Jesus and become like Him. How do we begin to “look” and “sound” like Him so that people know we are His?

2. Jesus sent His disciples out to preach, with all their character flaws still needing to be ironed out and many of their ruthless ambitions still in tact. How was this work the disciples did not just what Jesus was doing through them for others but work He was doing for them? In other words, how were they teaching and learning at the same time? How does that help us know what our apprenticeship to Jesus consists of?

**Application Questions:**

1. Disciples confess Christ before others. Confessing involves more than telling people about Jesus. How can your actions show to others that you love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself?

2. Andrew and Peter, James and John made a complete break with their past to join Christ. How might we too have to break with our pasts?

**Witnessing**

Anyone who has ever grown grapes will know that the grapevine often behaves less like a plant and more like fire. It grows aggressively and needs excessive pruning and constant care.

Two thousand years ago, as Jesus walked with His disciples at night to
The Essence of Discipleship

Implicit in the reality of following the Master was a call to a life of community and fellowship. Jesus and the disciples must have had a close companionship. That such a relationship is at the core of discipleship can be seen from His words in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches” (NIV). The intimate attachment between a vine and a branch that inspired Jesus’ illustration is noteworthy.

In John 15:9 Jesus compares their relationship with that between Him and His Father. He calls on His disciples to abide in His love, further strengthening this idea of our need to be closely attached to Him.

From each of the texts below, what else can we learn about discipleship?

Matt. 10:32, 33

Matt. 22:37–40

John 14:15

What is your understanding of Matthew 10:24, 25 and Luke 6:40? What do they illustrate about discipleship?

If discipleship, as previously seen, involves a clean break with the past, then out of necessity it must inspire a vision of the future. The disciple envisions being with the Master, learning from Him, and becoming like Him. Mark 3:14 says that disciples were called “to be with Him” (NKJV). There is no way that a disciple can be with Jesus and not learn from Him and not be inspired to be like Him. Moreover, they would also catch the vision of His kingdom and would desire to be part of it.

Do you sometimes feel discouraged in your walk with the Lord? Go back over the week’s lesson and see what you can find from the texts that can help you draw some encouragement and hope.
Gethsemane, the moon shone down illuminating a grapevine. Jesus pointed to the vine as a symbol of Himself. Grapes may spread like fire, but the wood is weak, needing support. And Jesus, because of His humanity, needed to be supported by God the Father. In that sustaining relationship is a promise for us. Just as the Father supports the Son, the Vine, Jesus will support the branches, His disciples.

**Consider This:** How does the Lord constantly care for and prune us? In what ways is He vigorously cutting us back and for what purpose?

The branches that flower but produce no fruit are a drain on the plant. What things drain us? How can we let God prune them from our lives?

This story took place at night before the terrible separation between Christ and His disciples. How do we draw comfort from the fact that when things are spiritually dark, we can still have a sustained connection to Christ?

**STEP 4—Apply!**


**Consider This:** Ask class members to share the ways in which they stay connected to Jesus. Offer the following suggestions to those who might find it difficult to know how to sustain that daily contact.

1. Just as the branch that bears fruit must be kept in constant connection with the vine to draw nourishment, we must have a vibrant prayer life. Ask Jesus to enrich your prayer life. Take time to pray every morning. Start out by thanking God for what He has done for you. Thank Him for Jesus. Then ask Jesus to forgive your sins and write your name in His book of life. Now bring your petitions to Him. If you don’t see answers right away, don’t give up. Keep praying, waiting patiently for Him. Remember that Jesus may not always give us what we want, but He will always give us what we need.

2. Here is an activity for a group. Jesus often drew on the things around Him to illustrate deep spiritual truth to His disciples. As a disciple of Jesus, remember that you are still a full-time student in the school of Christ. It is a school from which we will never graduate. Take your class out into nature and ask Jesus to teach you, through the things around you, how to stay intimately connected to Him. What other things might be good object lessons about how to abide in Jesus? Share your object lessons with one another.

“No mere theory of truth or profession of discipleship will save any soul. We do not belong to Christ unless we are His wholly. It is by halfheartedness in the Christian life that men become feeble in purpose and changeable in desire.”—Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 50.

“Matthew ‘left all, rose up, and followed Him.’ There was no hesitation, no questioning, no thought of the lucrative business to be exchanged for poverty and hardship. . . . So it was with the disciples previously called.

“When Jesus bade Peter and his companions follow Him, immediately they left their boats and nets. Some of these disciples had friends dependent on them for support; but when they received the Saviour’s invitation, they did not hesitate, and inquire, How shall I live, and sustain my family? They were obedient to the call.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 273.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between discipleship and church membership? Why is it important for us to know the difference? In what ways can a person be a church member and not be a disciple?

2. Read the second Ellen G. White reference above. At one level, the meaning is clear: We must be wholly devoted to Jesus, no matter the personal cost. At the same time, how is this principle open to abuse? In what ways could this idea be used by someone to evade what are, really, God-given responsibilities? How can we know the difference between being committed and using commitment as an excuse for some other agenda?

3. What does it mean to be committed wholly to the Lord? What are the practical and positive ways commitment and discipleship can be manifested? Also, ask yourself this question: How are the lives of those around me improved and helped by my faithfulness to the Lord?

4. What does it mean to deny self and take up your cross? Though we always tend to think of this command on an individual basis, would this also be words to your local church, as a whole? If so, how so?
Discipleship Then and Now

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20, NIV).

Discipleship goes back to even before the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Several centuries before His coming into this world in human flesh, there were disciple-gathering teachers who influenced the lives of others with their instructions. This was true with the Greeks, the Jews, the Chinese, and other ancient cultures. Several of these teachers refused to accept the use of the term teacher in reference to themselves or that of disciple in reference to their pupils, so close was the bond between them.

This week’s lesson explores discipleship in other settings, compares it with Jesus’ discipleship, and examines the implications for the disciples of Jesus who live in the twenty-first century.

The Week at a Glance: What was discipleship like among the Greeks and the Jews? How was discipleship different with John the Baptist and with Jesus of Nazareth? What applications for the contemporary task of discipleship can we gain from discipleship in the time of Jesus?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 12.
Discipleship Among the Greeks

“Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’” (John 12:20, 21, NRSV).

The fact that these Greeks went to worship at the festival should tell us something about them already. Also, the verses beforehand reveal that so much was happening that the attitude of the Greeks should not be surprising.

Read the following texts. What insight could they shed upon what was happening here? Jer. 29:13; John 1:9; 6:44; Acts 10:34, 35.

Last week we saw that Jesus always chose His own disciples. The above texts might, at first glance, indicate something different. Yet, that is not the case. Even here the Spirit was wooing these Greeks.

In Greek culture, discipleship took many different forms. Though some Greek teachers would initiate the call to discipleship, the tradition was for the students to choose the teacher. The students, not the teacher, initiated the relationship. Also, it was common for the teachers to charge a fee for the students who studied with them.

In this case, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these Greeks were seeking Jesus, to learn from Him. Given that God uses what we know to teach us what we need to know, this is a viable notion. Indeed, Ellen G. White notes that “the Greeks longed to know the truth in regard to His mission.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 622. She also said that Jesus granted their request.

If someone were to come up to you, as these Greeks did to Philip, and say, “We wish to see Jesus,” what would you answer? How would you introduce them to Him?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** *Mark* 16:19, 20

**The Student Will:**
- **Know:** Understand that Jesus confirmed His Word through His disciples with signs and wonders.
- **Feel:** Cultivate a desire to work closely for, and with, Jesus.
- **Do:** Make the places he or she goes each day a mission field.

**Learning Outline:**

I. **Know: Jesus Confirms His Word**

A. Mark gives the sense that the action of the disciples in 16:20 is a direct and immediate response to what happened with Jesus in verse 19. What was that? What does their response teach us about our own response to Jesus’ Word?

B. What does the fact the disciples preached “everywhere” reveal about the gospel’s scope?

C. How are we to understand Mark’s words that the Lord “confirmed His word by signs that accompanied it”? What kind of miracles might this include? Why were signs important?

II. **Feel: His Word in Us**

A. Does Jesus perform wonders in our lives? Explain. What are the signs and miracles we see? How do we define them?

B. What “words” or truth might Jesus wish to confirm in us? How else might Jesus do that besides signs and miracles?

III. **Do: Working With Jesus**

A. Discipleship to Jesus and other figures of His time often include telling others about wonders performed by one’s master. How can we, as disciples of Jesus, do the same?

B. The disciples preached “everywhere.” How can your home, school, or job be a mission field?

**Summary:** As Jesus’ disciples, we can draw lessons from the lives of His early disciples.
Discipleship Among the Jews

Pupil-teacher relations are mentioned in the writings of Jewish scholars, such as Philo and Josephus. There were also two famed rabbis, Hillel and Shammai, who had rival schools in Jerusalem and who attracted followers. We also are told in Acts that Saul of Tarsus was the pupil of Rabbi Gamaliel, another famed first-century Jewish teacher (Acts 5:34–39, 22:3).

Read the above texts. What can we learn about Gamaliel from them?

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These teachers were reputed throughout the first century among the Jews. They attracted pupils from the whole world to Jerusalem, the center of theological and juridical knowledge of Judaism, to sit at the feet of these masters. A young Jew who desired to become a rabbi began his education as a pupil at a very early age, perhaps as early as fourteen. He was in personal contact with his teacher, listening to his instructions, imitating his gestures, and learning from him in the classroom and in daily life. In the classroom, he assumed the posture of a learner, sitting at his master’s feet. When he mastered the traditional material, he was designated a nonordained scholar. Ordination came later at a prefixed age. At that time, the title rabbi was bestowed upon him, as well as the power to bind or loose for all time the Jews of the entire world.

What we have seen in the preceding paragraphs is consistent with the glimpses of Jewish teacher-pupil relations we get from the New Testament. What light do they shed on the understanding of the following passages? Matt. 16:19, 18:18.

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Have you known a teacher you have admired, who made a great impact on your life for good? What were the aspects of that teacher that so impressed you? In what ways can you emulate those traits in your own life?
learning cycle

step 1—motivate!

key concept: Jesus expects the same commitment to the task of discipleship from us as He did from the early disciples.

What debt do the living owe the dead? How does their legacy shape the tasks we are called to do? Questions like these haunted one man on a train ride to a place where the dead outnumbered the living.

The body count was not in the hundreds but the thousands. Seventy-five hundred dead, and that was just the toll in human corpses. Several thousand dead horses added to the smell, making it almost suicide to breathe. A burial site was quickly chosen, and two dignitaries of state were called to speak. The first speaker delivered a two-hour-long eulogy. The second speaker, the man from the train, was to dedicate the burial ground to those who had fought there. He was more of a “ribbon cutter” at a land breaking ceremony—his part in the dedication secondary and trivial. When he rose to speak, the audience fanned themselves in the sweltering heat and braced for another long oratory. His speech was over, it seemed, before it started. But then again, you don’t need two hours to speak less than three hundred words. Those same words predicted “no one will remember what we say here.” While this was certainly true of Edward Everett’s speech, this is not true of Abraham Lincoln’s. His humble speech, which would go down as one of the greatest in U.S. history, closed with these words:

“It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. . . .”

consider this: Abraham Lincoln spoke of the dedication “to the great task” before them. Just as the early disciples had a task, Jesus calls us to dedicate ourselves to the tasks of discipleship before us. What are those tasks? How do we carry forward the work they began?

step 2—explore!

bible commentary

I. “‘We Would See Jesus’” (Review John 12:20–26 with your class.)
Discipleship With John the Baptist

Read John 3:21–30. Explain what this passage says about John the Baptist in relationship to discipleship. Was he also a disciple-gathering teacher? Because he did not have rabbinical education, what does the title rabbi say about the regard his pupils had for him?

It is apparent that some Jews wondered whether John the Baptist was the Messiah. This is implied by the questions of the messengers whom the priests and Levites from Jerusalem sent to John the Baptist (John 1:19–28). Their questions are significant, especially when one considers that a two-messiah concept had developed among the Jews during this period between the Old and New Testaments. It anticipated a priestly messiah from the tribe of Levi and a kingly messiah from the tribe of Judah. The fact that priests and Levites were sent is therefore notable since they belonged to the tribe of Levi.

It is possible that the disciples of John saw him as a priestly messiah; after all, he was from the tribe of Levi. This belief could also have motivated the Jerusalem visitors, who inquired of John regarding his mission. Some scholars believe that this was the reason the author of the fourth Gospel recorded so much of what the Baptist said about Jesus. He wanted it to be absolutely clear that John the Baptist saw Jesus, not himself, as the Messiah. Perhaps it is against this background that we must understand John 3:25, 26.

What was the issue that caused some distress among John’s disciples? See John 3:21–30. What does their attitude say about them? In contrast, what does John’s response tell us about his character? What principle can we learn from John’s response that we could apply to our own lives?
Just who were the Greeks who asked Philip to see Jesus? We don’t know their names, professions, or whether they lived in Jerusalem or had sailed from Athens or Ephesus. But we can consider the backdrop of the scene in which they came seeking Jesus and it can help us understand what they wanted.

It was Passover in Jerusalem. Jesus had just made a very public and kingly entrance on a colt into the city through streets littered with palm fronds and coats. His entrance excited fears and ambitions. Alarmed at Jesus’ growing influence, the Pharisees put out word that if anyone knew where Jesus was they should kindly let them know. Six days before this, Jesus sat at supper with Lazarus, back from the dead, whom the Pharisees plotted to snuff out to quiet the hooplah about Jesus. Meanwhile, Jews streamed into the city to purify themselves for the feast. Some were curious about Lazarus and wanted an eyeful of the One who made the dead walk. Many hoped Jesus’ entrance into the city was a sign He would take David’s throne from Herod and incite a revolt against Rome. Into this hotbed of intrigue, gossip, and near bloodshed entered the Greeks.

We don’t know how many there were. But we do know that they did not come to gawk. They were seeking Jesus, and the Spirit of God drew them. Hundreds of years before, another Greek, Herodotus, had wandered the earth seeking for truth and to find things out. In this tradition of questing for knowledge, these men wanted to “see” or behold Jesus. And from Jesus’ response we can deduce that they wanted to understand His purpose. But Jesus tells them the strangest thing. If they want to serve Him, they must fall like grain into the ground and die?

Consider This: Imagine traveling from afar to hear a great teacher, who tells you that the answer to life is death. What did Jesus mean by the words in John 12:24? How does Lazarus’s death help us understand what this illustration means? What does this say to us today as disciples about our commitment to Jesus? What is He asking us to do?

II. Water Into Wine (Review with your class John 1:35–40.)

Jesus involved His disciples in every aspect of His ministry. When He sent them out to preach and teach, they did so with confidence because of what they had seen Him do, starting with His first miracle at Cana.

So they would have heard Jesus’ mother turn to tell Him there was no wine. They saw her tell the servants to do as her Son instructed. They must have watched with curiosity as Jesus told the servants to fill the six water pots with water and then with growing amazement as Jesus
Discipleship With Jesus

From the very outset of His public ministry, Jesus had disciples. He appeared on the first-century Jewish scene as a disciple-gathering teacher in the tradition of both Greek and Jewish teachers. There were also points of contact with John the Baptist since John baptized Him in preparation for His mission.

As in both Jewish and Greek traditions, Jesus had disciples who followed Him everywhere, who listened to His teaching, and who imitated Him (Matt. 5:1, 2; John 1:35–40; 2:1, 2).

Carefully read Matthew 4:18–20; then (going back over Sunday’s and Monday’s lessons) compare the ways in which one came to be a disciple of Jesus, of the Greek teachers, and of the established rabbis. What things did they have in common? What things were different?

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“Until this time none of the disciples had fully united as colaborers with Jesus. They had witnessed many of His miracles, and had listened to His teaching; but they had not entirely forsaken their former employment. The imprisonment of John the Baptist had been to them all a bitter disappointment. If such were to be the outcome of John’s mission, they could have little hope for their Master, with all the religious leaders combined against Him. Under the circumstances it was a relief to them to return for a short time to their fishing. But now Jesus called them to forsake their former life, and unite their interests with His. Peter had accepted the call. Upon reaching the shore, Jesus bade the three other disciples, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Immediately they left all, and followed Him [Matt. 4:19, 20].”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 246–249.

What has Jesus called you to give up in order to follow Him? What has your response to that call been? Might you still be holding on to something that is standing in the way of a full commitment to the Lord?
told them to take the water pots to the one in charge of the feast. With what astonishment they must have listened as the steward declared that this wine tasted better than the first batch. The disciples must have then looked back with wonder at Jesus. They had seen what had gone into those pots. They knew it was only water.

**Consider This:** What does Jesus’ effort to take time to attend a wedding say to us about how the social activities of life can be part of our mission to serve Him? Why is it significant that this is Jesus’ first miracle? In exchange for our commitment to Him, what does this story promise that Christ commits to us as His disciples?

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Thought Questions:**

1. What does Jesus mean by “ask anything in my name” and it shall be done “according to your faith” in John 14:13, 14 and Matthew 9:29? What is this promising us? For what purpose? What is this not promising us?

2. What does the gospel commission in Matthew 28:19, 20 show us Jesus expects us to do today? In light of these texts, how can we commit to these tasks as disciples of Jesus? How is He calling us in our sphere to serve Him? How can these texts help us to know His will in our lives as His disciples and follow Him?

**Application Questions:**

1. Sunday’s study makes the statement: “God uses what we know to teach us what we need to know.” Ask your students to share how God has done this for them. What did they learn? What did He use to teach them?

2. In turning the water into wine Jesus had a deeper purpose: to give His disciples a lesson in faith. What does this first miracle at Cana show about Jesus’ teaching methods? How did He grab His disciples’ attention? How did He convince their hearts? How can we use these methods to reach others?

**Witnessing**

Chances are as a child you went out on summer evenings with an empty jar to catch fireflies. Fireflies are very romantic beasts. They spend their whole adult lives courting. But then again, if you are a firefly your whole
Contemporary Discipleship

“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20, NIV).

According to the above verse, what was one major characteristic seen in the disciples of Christ? What message is there for us, as well? See also Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Rev. 14:6–12.

Beside the fact that the disciples were preaching everywhere, Mark said that the Lord worked with the early disciples after His departure and confirmed His word among them by the signs that accompanied it. Are contemporary disciples seeing God’s confirmation of His word among them through signs and miracles? What are some of the signs and miracles we see? How do we define signs and miracles? Should we expect the same kind of signs and miracles in every culture, time, and society?

Are there other ways, besides signs and miracles, for God to confirm His word among us? If so, how?

Jesus has no less expectation of His disciples today than He had for the early ones. He requires the same commitment to the task from us. However, He says, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). Moreover, He says, “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13, 14, NIV).

How involved are you in the work of spreading the gospel? What are your own spiritual gifts, and how can they be used in this work? When was the last time you did anything at all in terms of helping others know the wonderful truths that you have been entrusted with? What does your answer tell you about yourself?
adult life span consists of only one or two weeks. That doesn’t leave much spare time for anything but courtship if the species is to survive.

To attract a female, the male firefly flashes his belly on and off. Female fireflies are for the most part wingless. The male uses his luminescence to signal in intricate flashing patterns to a female on the ground. With over two hundred kinds of fireflies, the flashing patterns help fireflies find their own kind. Once a match is found, the male lands near the female to consummate the match. The female then deposits her fertilized eggs underground. After three weeks, they hatch and come out of the ground for one or two years, until they grow into pupa and then into the fireflies seen on summer nights.

**Consider This:** We are unable to come to Jesus as the wingless fireflies on the ground are unable to fly. When the Greek seekers went looking for Jesus, they had to wait for Jesus to come to them. But Jesus, the Light of the world, drew the Greeks to Him with His Spirit. How is our seeking Him a response to His first seeking us?

* Jesus says that if we would serve Him we must first fall into the ground like grain and die. The fireflies, too, illustrate this truth by burying their eggs. Only after being hidden can they emerge, becoming what they were meant to be. As disciples, why must self be hidden in Christ for us to become His disciples?

**STEP 4—Apply!**

Discuss ways your class members can deepen their commitment to the task of discipleship. Use the following activities to help meet this goal:

1. Jesus used the grain to show the idea that a true disciple must die to self to live for Him. Think of examples from nature or from your culture that illustrate this idea. How can you share them with others?

2. Remember the wedding feast at Cana. Find someone who has empty “water jars” to fill. Maybe you know carpentry or plumbing and know someone who needs a bathroom fixed but can’t afford to hire someone. Or maybe you’re good with numbers and can tutor someone in math. How can you use this opportunity to meet both temporal and spiritual needs?
**Further Study:** Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 432, 433, 582–585, 932, 1022, 1023; Ellen G. White, “Who Is the Greatest?” p. 432, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“For a time the Baptist’s influence over the nation had been greater than that of its rulers, priests, or princes. If he had announced himself as the Messiah, and raised a revolt against Rome, priests and people would have flocked to his standard. Every consideration that appeals to the ambition of the world’s conquerors Satan had stood ready to urge upon John the Baptist. But with the evidence before him of his power, he had steadfastly refused the splendid bribe. The attention which was fixed upon him he had directed to Another. Now he saw the tide of popularity turning away from himself to the Saviour. Day by day the crowds about him lessened. . . . But the disciples of John looked with jealousy upon the growing popularity of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 178.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is involved in leaving everything behind in order to follow Jesus? What are the different ways such a commitment is made manifest in our lives? In class on Sabbath, be prepared to talk about your own understanding of what this means.

2. What roles should our educational institutions have in helping make disciples? How can our churches and our schools better work together in this important challenge?

3. Even in the time of Jesus there was a rivalry among disciples. Why is something like this so common, even among a work that is, ideally, so exalted, a work that should by its very nature keep us all humble and eager for the success of others? What practical things can we do to keep ourselves from falling into this trap?

4. What about this whole question of signs and wonders and miracles? Do we believe in this? If so, what do we believe about it? What do signs and wonders prove? What do they not prove? Why should we always approach these things with caution, humility, and firm reliance on the Word of God?
Called to Discipleship by Jesus

Sabbath Afternoon

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 4:18–22; 5:46; 9:10, 11; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11; 18:10, 11; John 1:35–51.

Memory Text: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

When Garibaldi published that famous proclamation to his soldiers after the storming of Rome, ‘Soldiers! I have nothing to offer you but hunger, thirst, hardship, death. Let all who love their country follow me!’ he knew many a gallant youth would follow him, accepting hunger, and thirst, and death.”—A. Gordon Nasby, ed., Treasury of the Christian World (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 92. Unlike Garibaldi’s, Jesus’ call was not for love of country but for love of God, a call that—though possibly involving hunger, thirst, hardship, and death—also offers the promise of eternal life. Thus, people then and now accept His call to follow and to commit their lives to Him, and by so doing make a difference in this world now and for eternity.

This week we will take another look at the earliest calls to discipleship and seek to glean from them lessons for ourselves.

The Week at a Glance: What were the first calls to discipleship like? What role did Scripture have in those calls? What can we learn from the call of Levi Matthew? Despite many differences, what are some of the common elements found in the call to discipleship? What advantages do we have today over the early disciples?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 19.
The First Calls

Read John 1:35–51 and then answer the following questions:

1. How did John the Baptist help set the stage for the call of these first disciples? From what John did, what can we learn for ourselves and for our mission as a people?

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2. How central were the Scriptures to the people’s willingness to follow Jesus? What message is there for us?

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3. What role do we see for the disciples in calling others to follow Jesus? What does that tell us about our own calling?

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After Andrew spent a little time with Jesus, he not only believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but he immediately did what the Master expects every disciple to do: Spread the joy of discipleship. Andrew seemed to have understood a vital principle of discipleship: It is neither for private use nor does it belong to a gated community or an exclusive club. Rather, it is an experience that must be shared with others.

From Andrew’s response to discipleship, a pattern emerges. Andrew heard John speak and followed Jesus. Next, he told his brother Peter of his experience and brought him to Jesus, and Peter became a follower, as well.

In the same way, we hear the truth about Jesus, make a commitment to follow Him, and then tell others about Jesus. This is repeated day by day, all over the world.

If you were to tell someone about Jesus, what would you say? How deep is your experience with the Lord? What would you say about Jesus that could make someone be interested in following Him?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Luke 5:1–11

The Student Will:

Know: Comprehend what Jesus expects from His disciples and what we can expect from Him.
Feel: Sense a desire to abide in God’s presence.
Do: Choose to put Jesus first.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: The Call
A What does fishing suggest about the work Jesus intends disciples to do?
B How does the response of the first disciples to their calling show that the Lord requires a complete commitment?
C What assurance does Jesus give Peter in the miraculous catch of fish?
D Why did Peter tell Jesus to leave if he intended to forsake everything to follow Him? What was this a recognition of?

II. Feel: The Calling
A How does Jesus call us to leave our old lives behind? What challenges might we face?
B What makes it possible for us, who like Peter are fallen, to abide in the Divine Presence?
C Peter’s nets were so heavy that he called for backup to keep from sinking. How does this illustrate the importance of teamwork in the gospel?

III. Do: Respond
A Peter went from a boatload of nothing to a boat so heavy with fish that it started to sink. How do we as disciples keep from sinking under the weight of success?
B Why would Jesus give Peter such success only to ask him to leave it? Why is willingness to drop everything for Jesus necessary? What is the secret to doing that?

Summary: Just as Jesus gave Himself entirely to us, He accepts nothing less than our entire self for Him.
The First Call in Matthew and Mark

In Matthew 4:18–22 and Mark 1:16–20, we are given other perspectives on this first call. In both examples, those He called dropped their nets and followed Him. What does that mean?

This is not the only time and place this principle is found in the Bible.

Look up the following texts. How do we see the same principle being manifested here, however different the circumstances?

Gen. 12:1 (see also Heb. 11:8)

1 Kings 19:19–21

Phil. 3:8

Heb. 11:24

The point cannot be repeated enough: The Lord demands the whole heart. That which we do not surrender to Him, that which we cling to, refusing to give up, becomes an idol, something we deem more important than the Lord. What is worse, those things we cling to become the hooks the devil uses to wean us away from the Lord completely. That is why we must be willing to forsake anything and everything the Lord asks us to. We cannot, as He said, “serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24).
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Key Concept: The call to discipleship involves a commitment of the entire life to Jesus and the desire to share Him with others.

Have you ever committed everything to a cause when all hope of a favorable outcome seemed lost? Defying insurmountable odds requires a heroic commitment to faith that few achieve. And when they do, we remember them.

The year was 1570, on the fifteenth of March. Two mighty armies clashed on the field of Jarnac. The army of Catherine de Medici butchered the Huguenot regiments. The Huguenot commander, the Prince of Condé, fell. Wounded and unhorsed, he fought on his knees until he was slain. The Huguenot army retreated from the carnage, beaten in battle and in spirit.

Soon after, a woman entered their ranks. On her one side rode her son. On her other rode her nephew, the son of the fallen prince. The eyes of the soldiers watched in silence as Jeanne d’Albret, Queen of Navarre, rode down their defeated ranks. In 1560, she had openly professed the Protestant faith. In 1563, she proclaimed an edict abolishing papal services in Bearn. Her husband forsook her. The pope thundered his excommunications against her, while the powerful kings of Spain and France plotted to rip her tiny kingdom off the map of Europe. But she did not turn away from her faith. Now riding among the battered remnants of the army, her voice rang out, “ ‘I offer you everything I have to give—my dominions, my treasures, my life, and what is dearer to me than all, my children. I swear to defend to my last breath the holy cause that now unites us!’ ” In the hour of defeat when the hearts of men failed for courage, her commitment gave them hope.—Adapted, J. A. Wylie, The History of Protestantism, vol. 3, p. 1333.

Consider This: Based on the what and how much the Queen of Navarre was willing to sacrifice, how would you define commitment? How did her commitment give her a powerful truth to share with these men who lost everything? What does her willingness to sacrifice everything to the Reformed cause tell us about what discipleship means?

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. “Come and See” (Review with your class John 1:35–51.) CONTINUED
The Call in Luke

Luke 5:1–11 contains Luke’s version of the disciples’ call. As with the other Gospel accounts, it brings in elements not found in other Gospels, while omitting elements found in others. Some claim that the accounts are, therefore, contradictory. Instead, careful scrutiny usually resolves any issues, showing simply that despite the different details or emphasis, the accounts harmonize, especially on the crucial points.

Read Luke 5:1–11. What indications are there that Peter already had some faith in Jesus?

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Think about it. They had fished all night, when fishing was the best, and caught nothing. Jesus then comes along and tells them to let the net into the water. Is He joking? If we did not catch anything all night, how are we going to in the day? Yet for some reason, Peter listens. Did he already have reasons to trust in Jesus?

What was Peter’s response? How does that response, in many ways, capture the essence of discipleship and the everlasting gospel? Isa. 53:6, Rom. 5:16–21, 1 John 1:7–9.

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Despite our fallen natures, despite our faults and our weaknesses, despite the fact that we, like Peter, are sinful, God does not abandon us. How natural it would be for any of us, in the presence of the Divine, to say, “Depart from me.” Under the blood of the Cross, we can abide in the presence of God. Under the blood of the Cross, we can be His disciples.

Dwell on what Jesus did for us at Calvary. Dwell on the promises of acceptance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God because of the Cross. Claim the promises made to you, not because you feel worthy of them (was Peter?) but because God has promised them, and you want to take Him at His Word.
A delegation of Pharisees had come to John the Baptist to ask point blank if he was Moses come back from the dead. John stunned the crowd by announcing that there was One standing in the crowd who was greater than all the prophets dead or living. Heads must have turned left and right, trying to spot the One he spoke of. But they saw only poor workers—fishermen, farmers like themselves. Maybe John was suffering heatstroke from all that time in the desert, some may have wondered. That or his strict diet of locusts and honey had impaired his judgment.

Two days later, John again saw in the crowd the One greater than all. This time he pointed Him out directly. “Look, there’s the Lamb of God.” Surely the time was ripe for the promised Deliverer to free Israel from bondage, so John’s announcement shouldn’t have come as a shock. After all, weren’t the seventy weeks of Daniel almost up? But as those in the crowd slid their eyes over to the Man John pointed to, hopes probably flared then turned to disbelief. That Man was supposed to break the Roman yoke? Perhaps, they had in mind someone who looked a little more kingly like Herod or who was as muscled as a Roman gladiator. Perhaps that explains why no one rushed over to Jesus as the Magi or shepherds had and showered Him with gifts or bowed down at His feet—even though God Himself descended on Him like a dove and declared in a voice of thunder that this was His Son. It’s a wonder at all that two followed after Him from that crowd.

Jesus did not at first turn to them. He let them follow a little way, perhaps to test their resolve. And when He did turn to them, He asked them a simple question. “What do you seek?” It was one that required of them to state what was in their hearts. But because it was a question, it also allowed Andrew and John to turn away if they chose. So it is always with all who come to Jesus. He never forces those He draws. But at some point He asks us for a response to His drawing—“What do you seek?”

Consider This: What did Andrew and John’s response reveal about their hearts? Why did they make such good candidates for disciples?

Jesus’ response to their question about where He dwelled was answered with the invitation, “Come and see.” How does Jesus still invite us to “Come and see” where He dwells today? What does it mean to “abide” with Him?

II. Levi Matthew (Review with your class Luke 5:27, 28.)

When Matthew got dressed to go to work at the tax office in Capernaum, it seemed like just another typical day doing the most
The Call of Levi Matthew

Read Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14, and Luke 5:27, 28. Compare the call of Levi Matthew with that of the other early disciples. What are the similarities and the differences between the call of Levi Matthew and the other disciples so far?

Up to this point, those Jesus called to discipleship were apparently devout Jews, as John 1:44, 45 implies. The call to Levi Matthew, however, comes to one on the fringes of society. He was a publican and, as such, was deemed among the worst of society by the Jews.

Read Matthew 5:46; 9:10, 11; Mark 2:16; and Luke 18:10, 11. What do these texts tell us about how people such as Matthew were viewed in that society?

Matthew was the most unlikely candidate for a call to discipleship. First, he was called from the tax collector’s booth. Roman writers linked these people with brothel keepers; the rabbis classed them with robbers. They were seen as extortionists (Luke 3:12, 13), notoriously dishonest and universally hated, especially since they were Jews who defrauded their countrymen for the enemy and also swindled the government.

How unlikely that one with such a character and a reputation should have been called to discipleship by Jesus! Yet, that is precisely what happened. Christ’s call here speaks to the universality of the salvation He brought, the inclusiveness of His kingdom, and His willingness to give all a chance at salvation.

Who are some in your own society that are deemed outcasts, socially and morally unacceptable? What kind of attitude do you have toward those people? What can we learn, from the story of Levi Matthew’s call, about not being too quick to pass judgment upon others?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

despised job in Judea. Luckily for him, there was finally Someone in
town more hated by some than he—with this new Teacher named Jesus.
But what was it that made tax collectors so universally despised?

First, there was a poll tax and a land tax. The poll tax had to be paid
by males (ages 14–65) and females (ages 12–65) simply for breathing.
It reminded the Jews they were slaves to Roman rule. The land tax was
an abomination to the Jews, who saw God as the Owner of land. And
let’s not forget the income tax.

But the money the Romans extracted from the Jews didn’t end there.
There were also duties that had to be paid. Need to use the main road?
Not until you pay the road tax. Traveling through the harbor? There was
a tax for that too. And one for the market. Carts were taxed. And there
was a tax for each wheel and the beast that pulled the cart. These duties
left a lot of room for abuses and extortion.

A tax collector could stop a traveler, make him unpack his goods, and
charge him whatever he liked. Revolts against the Romans resulted,
such as the one that the Roman governor Quirinius quelled with feroc-
ity. Romans “farmed out” to contractors the right to collect the taxes.
As long as the contractor collected the assessed figure by the end of the
year and turned it over to the Roman government, he was free to keep
whatever else he extorted beyond that. And because this happened all
too frequently, tax collectors were universally execrated. They were out-
casts—social lepers—from society. The only thing worse than a tax col-
lector was a Jewish tax collector. Being a member of this profession
was seen as the greatest betrayal to the Jewish nation. A tax collector
was seen as an apostate—someone cut off from God beyond saving.

Now, when we look at Jesus’ calling of Matthew, we understand the
outrage—not just of the scribes but the common people. Was Jesus out
of His mind? Not only does He ask Matthew to join Him, He eats food
bought with taxpayer money at Matthew’s house. Jesus didn’t have to
raise the dead to get tongues wagging; He just had to accept dinner invi-
tations from “untouchables” like Matthew.

Consider This: Matthew had been watching Jesus. We can assume
this from Matthew’s response. He left a lucrative business to follow
Him. He wouldn’t have done this if Jesus had been unknown to him. But
Jesus had also been watching Matthew. The Bible says that Jesus “saw”
Matthew. The word saw comes from the Greek word theaomai, “to
behold” or “to view attentively.” Jesus looked beneath the exterior into
the heart of the man himself. What does this teach us about the way
The Calling

**Based** on what we have looked at this week (and in previous weeks) about the call to discipleship, what special message can we find for ourselves in Hebrews 11:1?

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The amazing thing about the response of these disciples to Christ’s call was how little they must have known about what was coming, about what they were getting into by leaving everything and following the Master.

Though, as we saw this week, they had some biblical evidence at that time for believing that Jesus was the Messiah (*John 1:45*), a study of the Gospels reveals how much of the work and ministry of Jesus was still unknown to them, especially the most important part of His work: His death on the cross. As we know, right up until the end, and even after, they had grave misconceptions about what was to come.

**Read** Mark 10:35–40, John 18:10, and Acts 1:6. How do these texts help us grasp just how little they really understood?

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Think about the advantages that we, as modern-day disciples, have over those early disciples, especially right at the time they were first called. Sure, they got to witness many incredible miracles, but at the same time they did not know what we know about the work, the mission, and the ultimate triumph of what Christ was to accomplish. And yet, despite this, they moved ahead in faith, the kind of faith revealed in Hebrews 11:1.

**Are you weak in faith? Could it be the things you are watching, the things you are thinking about, the things you are devoting your time to?** What proactive steps can you take, right now, that will help your faith grow?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Jesus views us?

■ How does Jesus’ calling of Levi Matthew reveal the all-inclusiveness of the gospel? What does this teach us about not judging others?

STEP 3—Practice!

Thought Questions:

1. The first thing Andrew did after he spent time with Jesus was tell his brother that he had found Jesus. What principle is here for us about discipleship? Why is telling others one of the first things a disciple does?

2. Jesus was in the crowd, and no one saw Him but John. Why did no one discern Him?

3. Andrew brings his brother to Jesus, and Jesus “beheld” him. Why is this more than merely looking at something but a looking within the soul? What did Jesus see there? Three cock crows and three denials? And yet, He still told Peter to follow Him? What does this say to us about Jesus’ acceptance of us?

Application Questions:

1. Before asking them to leave their nets, Jesus gave them the assurance that God would supply all their needs. What promise is here for us in committing ourselves to the cause of Jesus as His disciples?

2. Peter gave Jesus the use of his boat to preach the gospel. Jesus returned the gift by filling it with fish. What does this tell us about how Jesus rewards any sacrifice made for the gospel?

STEP 4—Apply!

Discipleship Activity

Just as Andrew called Peter to come and see, Matthew responds to Jesus’ calling by inviting tax collectors, and presumably other social outcasts, to come and see Jesus at a feast given in His honor. What does this reveal to us about discipleship and our task as disciples? Hold your own agape feast at your church. Invite those you know who don’t know Jesus to come. Have each person invite a nonmember.

“Here were the four partners, in possession of the largest catch of fish they had ever brought to shore. At the moment of their greatest material success they abandoned their business. . . . Even in view of the higher significance of the miracle it must have taken a real measure of faith to leave their chosen occupation for an uncertain livelihood as followers of an itinerant teacher who, up to this time, had apparently had small success. . . . On the part of the disciples there was not the least hesitancy. The decision to dissolve their successful partnership as fishermen for a higher partnership with Jesus as fishers of men was made instantly and intelligently. They needed no time to think things over, no time to provide for the needs of their families. . . . They had launched out into the deep as ordinary fishermen; when they returned to shore they launched out by faith into the ‘deep’ to which Christ now called them, to fish for men.”—The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 739.

Discussion Questions:

1 In what ways do you need to rearrange your priorities so that you can glorify God more effectively and be more consistent in your discipleship?

2 In reference to Thursday’s lesson, what are the advantages that we today have over the disciples? What are the things that we know about that they did not? Make a list of these things and bring them to class. Discuss what you each find and then ask yourselves: What are we doing with these advantages to help us grow in grace ourselves? How can these advantages help us go out and make disciples?

3 Dwell more on the question regarding the call of Levi Matthew. In class discuss the question of prejudice against certain groups. What about your church as a whole? What groups of people are deemed outcasts in your society? How can you minister to them? So often churches reflect the culture around them, including the prejudices of that culture. How open are you to the Matthews of your own society? What can you do to help your own church overcome this terrible symptom of fallen human nature?
Lessons From Would-be Disciples

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “Another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God’ ” (Luke 9:61, 62, RSV).

Life comes filled with mysteries at every level. From the workings of subatomic particles, to the very nature of space and time themselves, there is so much we do not even begin to understand.

Probably, though, of all things mysterious and hard to fathom, nothing is more so than the workings of the human heart. People, in an instant, for reasons that seem so unknowable (perhaps even to themselves), make decisions that can impact their lives in a dramatic way, for good or bad, for all eternity. No wonder that Scripture, when talking about the heart, says, “Who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9).

This week we will look at some would-be disciples and the decision of their hearts.

The Week at a Glance: What do the Gospels say about would-be disciples? What lessons may we learn from their experiences that can inform our discipleship, strengthen our faith, and deepen our commitment?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 26.
The Scribe

**Read** Matthew 8:19, 20 *(see also Luke 9:57, 58)*. What is the point of this story? What message is here for us? What principles can we take from it?

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Here is a case of someone who, not specifically called by Jesus, volunteered instead. Notice, too, just how intense his profession was. He would follow the Lord anywhere. It is easy, even for a true follower of the Lord, to make all sorts of pronouncements about being faithful *(Luke 22:33)*; it is not so easy, however, to follow up on them *(vss. 55–61)*.

**When** was the last time you made some bold promise of faithfulness to God that you later broke? What lesson did you learn from that experience?

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What also is interesting about this encounter is that the person who came to Jesus with that profession was a scribe, one of the educated elite in Israel. They were men of “culture, education, and station in life.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 365. Few scribes identified with Jesus; they were too upstanding. They followed Him, not to be influenced by His teaching but to entrap Him. Yet, here was a scribe who was touched by Jesus’ teaching to the extent that he volunteered to become a disciple.

Yet, Jesus knew the heart, and His response shows that, perhaps, this scribe’s motives were not pure. He may have wanted to join himself to Jesus in hopes of gaining worldly advantage. Christ’s response, however, quickly should have disabused him of any such notions. In the end, the text does not tell us what the ultimate choice of this scribe was. From what Jesus said, it is not hard to imagine the scribe turning away.

How do we understand what was happening with this scribe and with, for instance, Christ’s words in Mark 10:30? Are we not promised some immediate advantages in following Jesus now? If so, why is it not wrong to want those advantages? Or is it?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Matthew 8:21, 22

The Student Will:
Know: Recognize that being a disciple involves the whole heart.
Feel: Nurture a desire to put Jesus first.
Do: Commit to rooting out all that keeps us from Him.

Learning Outline:
I. Know: The Would-Be Disciple
   A We don’t know his name, or whether he was a Nazarene goatherder or a butcher from Bethsaida. But Matthew says he was a “disciple” of Jesus. Thus, he didn’t dispute the significance of Jesus’ call—only its timing. Why wasn’t the call enough?
   B Jesus’ response to let the dead bury the dead suggests that if this disciple didn’t commit fully now, he never would. What is the danger of procrastination?

II. Feel: A Love for God Above Everything Else
   A Not all this man valued—filial duty, honor—was bad. When does what is good become our enemy?
   B The response Jesus gave the unnamed disciple seems discouraging. Was that His intent? How should we understand it?
   C How do we, like this man, rationalize our refusal to arrange priorities properly? (After all, honoring one’s father is God’s law.)

III. Do: Removing Hindrances
   A This individual had his double-mindedness revealed by Jesus for all to see. How do our choices reveal our true focus?
   B Consider this man in light of the parable of the sower. Which one of the “seeds” is he most like? How can we avoid being weed choked by the cares of this world?

Summary: It is not enough to want to be disciples of Jesus; we must want Him more than anything else.
Read Matthew 8:21, 22. How do you understand what is going on here? Why would Jesus say something like this to a person who first wanted to bury his own father?

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Yesterday we viewed a scribe who sought discipleship. Today we encounter another volunteer, but one who is neither named as an individual or identified with a specific group. Examining the narrative, one wonders if Jesus was not unreasonable in His expectations. The man asked to bury his father, and in the Jewish faith it was a sacred duty to ensure a decent burial for a parent. What is going on?

Contrary to popular belief, the young man’s father was neither dead nor even at the point of death. It was even possible that he was at the time “enjoying good health, and the time of his death was indefinitely in the future.”—The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 366. If this is so, why did the man answer the way he did? Was it an excuse, one that Jesus saw through? Because the dead were usually buried the same day, had his father actually died, there would not have been a problem, because he could have attended to matters and then returned to discipleship.

This man’s response revealed his character. In contrast to the scribe’s hastiness and impulsiveness, he was slow, lethargic, lacking in zeal for the work, indecisive, and prone to procrastination. He was in fact delaying his discipleship to the indefinite future because he did not want to make an immediate commitment. If he did not commit right then, he would perhaps never commit. The man was, apparently, saying that he could begin discipleship only when the time was convenient for him. Furthermore, Jesus wanted it known that because of the limited time He had for ministry and training disciples, discipleship required undivided attention and full commitment.

Is the Lord calling you to do something (End a relationship? Give up a habit? Be faithful in tithe? Witness to someone?) that you intend to do, but not now? What are the dangers of delaying?
Learning Cycle

▲STEP 1—Motivate!

**Key Concept:** True disciples respond immediately to Jesus’ calling without delay, excuses, or hesitation.

Have you ever found yourself in a life or death situation? Dutch sea Captain Johan Lindeman did. All summer long Captain Lindeman had taken boatloads of European sightseers to an uninhabited island to experience the fanfare of an active volcano. On August 26, 1883, the little island, too small to even bother naming on most maps, exploded.

Lindeman was in the Sunda Straits at the time Krakatoa erupted. Heavy ash and pumice fell on the ship. The choppy waters made it impossible to land. Early next morning, the captain watched a wave sweep away those gathered on the pier of Telok Betong and beach a ship among coconut trees. To save his ship, he dropped both anchors, heading straight into the waves.

The ship was tossed violently. Sulphurous acid burned the air. In minutes the deck of the ship was covered in a foot and a half of pumice. The sea heaved convulsively as the crew worked desperately to clear the deck. It seemed a losing battle. A giant wall of water came at them.

Lindeman lashed himself down in the engine room. The monster wave hit and flung the crew from one side of the engine room to the other. The ship rode up the wave almost until it was vertical and seesawed down. All on board gave themselves up for dead. When the wind died down at around noon, a deadly calm ensued more frightening than the storm. But not one passenger lost his or her life thanks to the decisiveness of the captain who dropped anchor and headed straight into the killer waves.

**Consider This:** Instead of running from the waves, Captain Lindeman dropped anchors and headed straight into them. How did his quick thinking and action save the lives of his crew and passengers? Sometimes the right action involves considerable risk. In what sense is our calling to follow Jesus a life or death situation, even if it is not life-threatening?

▲STEP 2—Explore!

**Bible Commentary**

I. The Scribe *(Review Matthew 8:19, 20 with your class.)*

Many people called Jesus didaskalos, or rabbi (teacher), but few of them
The Rich Young Ruler

Read Mark 10:17–23 (See also Matt. 19:16–26, Luke 18:18–30). What lessons can we pull from the story of this would-be disciple?

Today’s lesson covers a colorful character. He did not come either timidly or under cover. He made a grand entrance. Mark says he ran to Jesus and fell on his knees before Him. While Mark and Matthew do not name the man, Luke says he was a ruler and thus perhaps a member of the honored council of the Jews. Matthew says that he was young. The name, the “rich young ruler,” is a composite description derived from all three accounts.

In Jesus’ presence, he immediately began a discussion, seeking, it seems, to flatter Jesus, who did not fall for the flattery. Instead, Jesus went right to the heart of his question, pointing the man to the law of God.

Why would Jesus, who knew that salvation could not be attained by works of the law (Rom. 3:28, Gal. 2:16), point him toward the law?

In a certain sense, the answer to that question is found in the response of the young man. Though he kept the law, he sensed that it was not enough. Something was missing, which is why he asked, “What lack I yet?” (Matt. 19:20). In other words, though he outwardly, in his actions, seemed a faithful follower of the Lord, something more was needed. Jesus’ words, and the man’s response to those words, showed that his heart was not truly converted. By pointing him to the commandments, Jesus showed him that true salvation is manifested in an obedience to the law that involves death to self. The man’s wealth had become an idol to him, and Jesus showed him that, despite his outward propriety, his treasure was on earth, not in heaven, and he needed a radical change of heart.

You might be keeping the commandments, at least outwardly, but where is your treasure? What reasons do you have for justifying your answer?
were scribes. No wonder that when one of them does, it is remarkable enough to be recorded by Matthew. Jesus stood for the destruction of their power. And yet, this man was drawn to the very One who threatened that power. How did this happen?

Jesus obviously had an impact on this man. Matthew reports a few verses earlier that Jesus had just healed the sick with nothing but a word and then healed the demon possessed. Perhaps this man had witnessed Jesus in action. This man was not just hearing Jesus talk; he watched Him work. He was confronted with more than the idea of Jesus; he was confronted with who Jesus was. And his heart stirred within him to follow the very Man his organization was striving to put to death.

Perhaps this was on Jesus’ mind when He told the scribe to count the cost before following Him. Jesus was not trying to dampen his ardor or enthusiasm but to focus and test it. The Christian way is never easy. There’s a cross to carry before there’s a crown. There’s self to die to and the need to put Jesus above every earthly consideration or obligation.

**Consider This:** What does it mean to “count the cost” of following Jesus? What is the difference between an emotional response and a true-heart commitment to Christ? How can you tell?

**II. Seizing the Moment** *(Review Matthew 8:21, 22 with your class.)*

We don’t know this man’s name, but we do know that he was already a disciple, which means he had already accepted a call from Jesus. But he was having trouble committing. His words to Jesus betray a heart torn between wanting to serve Jesus fully and discharging his obligations.

William Barclay explains the meaning behind the Middle Eastern expression “I must bury my father.” When the would-be disciple said this to Jesus, he was really saying “I can’t leave home and follow You, Jesus, until after my father’s death, which might not happen for many years. In the meantime, I need to fulfill my duties to my parents and relatives before I can leave.” This custom was considered a sacred duty for a son.

Jesus’ response lays bare the problem and the solution with a clarity that is almost brutal. Loyalty to the Lord trumps cultural expectations. “Let the dead bury the dead” is Jesus’ way of saying “I get that you have an important obligation to your parents but your obligation to Me needs to come first. Get out now or you will never get out and follow Me.”

**Consider This:** Contrast the advice Jesus gave to the scribe in
Nicodemus

One of the most famous accounts in the New Testament is that of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night and asked the question, “How can these things be?” (John 3:9).

Read John 3:1–21. What “things” was Nicodemus asking about?

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How interesting that Jesus would be talking to Nicodemus about the workings of the Holy Spirit when, in fact, it was obvious from Nicodemus’s words and actions that he himself was being convicted by the Holy Spirit. For him to come to Jesus, not to try to trap him (as so many of his contemporaries did) but to learn, shows the sincerity of his heart.

What can we learn from Christ’s words about discipleship from what He said to Nicodemus?

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Jesus’ response to Nicodemus not only was tailored to his needs but, in John’s Gospel, serves to identify suitable and unsuitable characteristics for discipleship. It says that physical birth and descent from the Jewish nation are insufficient for authentic discipleship. Discipleship presupposes a rebirth that unites one with the heavenly realm and opens one up to the constant working of the Holy Spirit. That Nicodemus misunderstood all this even further revealed the inadequacy of merely being born a Jew, or being born into the right family; it also provided an opportunity for further instruction on the nature of discipleship. Although Nicodemus did not make an immediate and open response to discipleship, he at times acted as a secret disciple. At least initially, he was a would-be disciple, because he did not commit then. As we know, that later changed (John 19:39).

You might be of right descent; that is, you might be in the right church, with the right doctrines and teaching. Why, though, is that not enough? How can we avoid the danger of thinking that membership in the right church, or even knowledge of true doctrines, is all that we need?
Matthew 8:19, 20 with the advice Jesus gave the unnamed, would-be disciple. Why would Jesus urge caution in one breath and then urge haste in the next? Why do you think these two scenarios were placed back-to-back? How do they balance each other out?

III. The Rich Young Ruler (Review Mark 10:17–23 with your class.)

The story of the rich young ruler ends in a personal, direct call to discipleship. Before this Jesus lists the commandments: They were couched as negative prohibitions against what not to do. Here was the rich young ruler’s fatal flaw. He was so focused on avoiding evil that he forgot about doing good. So Jesus’ statement, “You lack one thing,” really is a question that asks “You’ve spent your whole life avoiding evil and not doing harm to others, but what good have you done them?” This is Jesus’ way of saying it’s not enough to avoid bad things; we must do good things too.

The rich young ruler had an excellent reputation. But he lacked God in him, shining through his actions. And this one thing was everything. Without it, he had nothing, no matter how much he had. He wanted heaven. But not badly enough to give up everything to get it.

The Bible says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. This was after Jesus saw him for what he was—defective, selfish. But He saw him for who he could be. That is how Jesus’ all-penetrating eyes take something in. He saw this youth’s sincerity: He ran to Jesus. He knelt. He greatly admired the Savior. And Jesus’ question, “Why do you call Me good?” was not so much a rebuke but an attempt to draw out from this young man a deeper profession of faith. In seeking to get the young ruler to clarify why he called Jesus good, Jesus wanted to help the young man test his sincerity and to see what he lacked. In that test was an invitation not just to behold his own weakness but to serve the only One who can save us from our weakness. The rich young ruler turned away because the cost of eternal life seemed too inconvenient.

Consider This: Often the call to surrender self is presented in language that seems harsh because there is no other way to save us than to cut us away from what will kill us if we cling to it. How does this explain why Jesus asked the ruler to do away with his possessions?

IV. Mob Mentality (Review Luke 4:16–30 with your class.)

The hometown crowd can often be the hardest to please, as Jesus soon found out when He stood up to read. He chose these words from the
Herd Mentality

Salvation, we know, is personal. We are not saved in bunches; we are not corporately brought into the kingdom of heaven (see Ezek. 14:20). In the end, we each will have to answer for our own deeds, not for the deeds of others (Rom. 14:12).

Nevertheless, most of us do not live in isolation. We are in contact with other people, and we influence others, just as we are influenced by them. It is just part of human nature, even unfallen human nature (see Gen. 3:6), that we influence one another, either for good or for evil. How unfortunate that, unless we are careful, the influences can be negative.

Read Luke 4:16–30. What happened here? Why did the people, as a group, act as they did? What led to the downfall of these would-be disciples?

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Though at first they all marveled at His words, once those words became cutting, they turned, en masse, against Him. Imagine if some would-be disciple there, instead of succumbing to anger, submitted to the rebuke humbly. Who knows what his or her influence might have been on the others? Instead, it says that they all in the synagogue became angry, so angry that they tried to kill Him. No doubt each one’s anger influenced another, and then another, until the whole synagogue, who had come there to worship the Lord, in a spasm of anger sought to kill Him instead. Had any one of these people encountered Jesus’ rebuke on a one-to-one basis, they might have been angry, but most likely they would have walked away. Now, though, feeling the strength of a mob, they acted in a horrible way.

How easily influenced are you by the crowd, by the prejudices and teachings of your own society and culture? What practical steps could you take that could help protect you from the dangers of this herd mentality?
prophet Isaiah: “Because God hath anointed [chrio] Me,” which can freely be translated to mean God “hath made Me the Christ [the Anointed One].” There was no mistaking Jesus’ meaning.

What is interesting is that Jesus didn’t read the climax of the final passage of Isaiah 61:1, 2. It promised “the day of the vengeance of the Lord,” which the Jews took to mean salvation for them and retribution for their enemies. For Jesus to claim to be the Messiah and then to leave off the passage about vengeance seriously challenged their view of the Messiah and His work. Worse, Jesus dared to imply that the Messiah was going to offer salvation to their enemies instead of punishment.

This was too much for this crowd. Their fierce national pride resented the idea that the blessings of the gospel should be made available to heathens. Before He was done speaking they chased Him out of town. Had it not been for angels who shut Jesus in and led Him to safety, it would have been a cliff not a cross that Jesus would have died on.

Consider This: How important is influence? What difference would it have made if a Nicodemus or a Gamaliel (Acts 5) would have protested? What does this tell us about the influence and power of a single voice?

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**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Thought Questions:**

1. What is the danger to our faith of setting up false expectations of God? What do we have a right to expect from God?
2. The rich young ruler was sorry that conditions existed that would not allow him to have both his riches and heaven. How does this story define what idols are? What idols tempt us to give up heaven today?

**Application Questions:**

What does it mean to put Jesus first? How do we know we are truly seizing the moment to serve Him fully?

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**STEP 4—Apply!**

Just like the would-be disciple who pleaded with Jesus to let him take care of his family obligations first, we meet people whose hands seem too full to clasp hold of Jesus and follow Him. How can you be God’s hands to help free theirs to clasp hold of Jesus?

“In this age of diseased piety and perverted principle, those who are converted in life and practice will reveal a healthy and influential spirituality. Those who have a knowledge of the truth as it is revealed in God’s word must now come to the front. My brethren, God requires this of you. Every jot of your influence is now to be used on the right side. All are now to learn how to stand in defense of truth that is worthy of acceptance.”—Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 22.

“But while Nicodemus had not publicly acknowledged Christ, he had in the Sanhedrin council repeatedly thwarted the schemes of the priests to destroy Him. When at last Christ had been lifted up on the cross, Nicodemus remembered the words that He had spoken to him in the night interview on the Mount of Olives, ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up’ (John 3:14); and he saw in Jesus the world's Redeemer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 104.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Has there ever been a time when you got caught up in a herd mentality, when you went along with the crowd, perhaps in a fit of emotion, and did something you later regretted? If so, what have you learned from that experience that could help protect you from doing the same thing again?

2. Think more about the point addressed earlier this week regarding the idea that being part of the true church is not enough. What message is there for us as Seventh-day Adventists? How are we in danger of falling into that same trap, that idea that because we believe that we have truth, that is all we need? In class, talk about how we can protect ourselves from that delusion.

3. Review the reason that these would-be disciples used to not make a commitment (with, we know for sure, the exception of Nicodemus). What other excuses do people use? How can we as a church help those who are struggling with this momentous decision?

4. What’s the difference between being a “believer” and being a disciple?
SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word’ ” (Luke 1:38, NRSV).

Women were, one way or another, intimately involved in Christ’s ministry, even from the start. Mary, His earthly mother, gave birth to the infant Jesus. Of course, only a woman could have done that, but her example of faith and submission remains a powerful one for all who would seek to be a disciple of Jesus. Then, all through the Gospels, we can see the crucial role of women. From Mary the mother of Jesus, from the woman who touched His garment and was healed, to the woman at the well, and others, it is clear that a woman open to the prompting of God’s grace could be a follower and disciple of Christ.

In an attempt to gain more insights into what it means to be a disciple, this week we will take a look at how Jesus interacted with some women.

The Week at a Glance: What incredible things was Mary, Jesus’ mother, asked to accept on faith? What does the Bible say about the role of women in the ministry of Jesus? What can we learn about discipleship from the story of the woman at the well?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 2.
“Be It Unto Me”

Read Luke 1:26–38. Try to place yourself in the position of Mary. What can we learn about her character from these verses? What very difficult things was she told to believe?

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Even in an ancient society, where the concept of the supernatural was much more readily accepted than it is in many of our modernistic, scientific cultures, the angel’s words to Mary must have stretched her faith to the limits. First, she would be pregnant though still a virgin. Had that ever happened before in the history of the world? If that were not hard enough, her child would be the Son of God. Her question, “How shall this be?” was natural and normal enough. But once the angel pointed her to the miracle of her cousin Elisabeth, who conceived in old age (Luke 1:5–25), and then gave her the powerful reassurance, “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (vs. 37), Mary responded with an affirmation of faith and acceptance.

Read prayerfully and carefully her response to the angel: “Be it unto me, according to thy word” (vs. 38). What kind of attitude does this reveal? What kind of model of faith does Mary’s example provide for us?

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After centuries of theological discussion on the question of the Incarnation (the coming of Jesus in humanity), the subject remains an incredible mystery. Imagine how much this young woman did not understand about what was happening to her. And yet, even with all she did not know, she surrendered herself in faith to the Lord and wanted His will to be done.

As with Mary, we are asked to believe in things we do not fully understand. Compare your spirit to the spirit of faith Mary represented here. How open are you to trusting God on the things you just do not understand?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Luke 10:38–42

The Student Will:
- Know: Examine what the lives of the women who ministered to Jesus teach us about discipleship.
- Feel: Cultivate the desire to sit at His feet like Mary.
- Do: Determine to hear His Word and do it.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Serving Jesus
- A Mary heard Jesus’ words. How does it imply something that goes far deeper than the ear to the heart? How is this a requirement of discipleship?
- B In Jesus’ day, Mary’s place was not at His feet but in the kitchen. What does her posture reveal about the inclusiveness of the gospel?
- C The Greek text says Martha was “drawn away” by all her serving. What is the danger for us in serving Jesus without first sitting at His feet?

II. Feel: Faith Like Mary’s
- A How can we still hear Jesus’ words and sit at His feet like Mary?
- B Jesus was right there with Martha, and yet, she was “drawn away” from Him. How can we come so close to Him but fail to dwell in His presence?

III. Do: Seek the “One Thing”
- A What is the “one thing” Jesus praises Mary for having, and how do we seek it?
- B Notice Martha tries to “set Jesus straight.” She finds fault with Mary and blames Jesus for encouraging her. How do we sometimes make the mistake of telling God how to do His job? How should we respond instead?

Summary: In contrast to the culture of His day, Jesus sought and valued the contributions of women.
Female Followers of Jesus

**Luke** 8:1–3 describes Jesus’ second Galilean tour. Besides the Twelve original disciples, who else accompanied Jesus on this tour?

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Luke is very explicit that women accompanied Jesus on His missionary tours. This should not be surprising, because Luke’s Gospel emphasizes the salvation and the release Jesus brought to the outcasts, the women.

“Luke is the only gospel writer to record many of the details of the early life of Jesus, and often does so from the viewpoint of the women most concerned—Mary, Elisabeth, and Anna. . . . It is as if Luke were saying the gospel of the kingdom of heaven was as much for women as for men, and that their part in its proclamation was equally important.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 769, 770.

Jesus’ act of allowing female disciples was unique. Various religious movements in that time did not include women. Some teachers said that women were emptyheaded, were not to be taught, should not be seen in public with men, and should be confined to the home and domestic arts. Yet, from the earliest pages of the Gospel right up to the end, women, in one way or another, were involved in the life and mission of Jesus.

**Read** Matthew 27:55, 56 and Mark 15:40, 41. What more do they add about the role of women in the ministry of Jesus?

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Having been healed of various maladies, some of these women showed their love and devotion by assisting in His work and providing for His sustenance. Some of them might have been widows, since they were part of the missionary tour and had sustenance to provide for the needs of Jesus and His disciples. Whatever the specifics, the Word of God shows that women played an important role in the earliest days of the church.

**Read** Galatians 3:28. Looking beyond the immediate context, what should these words tell about how contrary to the principles of Christ prejudice is? Examine your own heart. What attitude and prejudices might you be holding that are contrary to God’s Word?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

**Key Concept:** We must spend time with Jesus and have a close relationship with Him in order to be His disciples.

Isn’t it curious that in many cultures the word *touch* is used to express not only physical contact but our emotions? We may say “What you said touched me deeply” to mean we are moved. Or, “She’s a bit touchy” to describe someone whose feelings are hurt easily. Companies tap into this in their advertising slogans: AT&T with their “Reach out and touch someone” campaign. And Johnson & Johnson’s slogan for their baby products: “Touch their todays. Touch their tomorrows.” These slogans are so effective, because of all the five senses, touch comes closest to embodying our relationships.

But touch is even more critical for our emotional well-being than one might think. Studies show that without it we would die. This truth is demonstrated palpably in the lives of the bonobo monkeys of the Congo. Baby bonobos are very delicate creatures. In the wild, they cling close to their mothers’ bodies for almost five years. Orphaned monkeys need constant love and attention, or they will give up and die. Only a “substitute mother”—a human male or female—who can give this care for eight to ten hours a day can keep the bonobo from giving up the fight for its life. Back in the seventies, Dr. Harry Harlow confirmed this with his studies of rhesus monkeys: Hunger for touch is even more important for infants than hunger for food. Without touch we would die.

**Consider This:** This week’s lesson talks about women who came into contact with Jesus—women who touched Him, talked with Him, sat at His feet, and heard His words. What does this tell us about our need to have a close relationship with Jesus? What does it mean to touch Him?

In what ways is Jesus our Substitute Parent when we are born again? What does the fate of orphaned bonobo monkeys tell us will happen to us if we deprive ourselves of His love and care for us?

STEP 2—Explore!

**Bible Commentary**

I. “Behold the Handmaiden of the Lord” *(Read Luke 1:26–38 with your class.)*

CONTINUED
“If I May Touch His Clothes . . .”

Read Mark 5:25–34, the famous account of the woman healed from a distressing malady. Though the story does not portray the woman as a disciple per se, she displayed the kind of faith so necessary for discipleship.

Notice the interesting contrast between how she approached Jesus and how Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, did (Mark 5:22, 23).

What were the differences between their approaches? At the same time, what was the one thing they apparently had in common?

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As far as we can tell, this woman had not seen Jesus before. According to the text, it was when she had heard of Him that she came. Someone had witnessed to her, telling her of this Man, and she moved ahead in faith, even without seeing anything for herself. This was her first act of faith (see also John 20:29, Heb. 11:1).

No question; according to the texts, the woman was desperate. Levitical law deemed her unclean. People were not to come in physical contact with her. If she had been married, she would not have been allowed intimate relations with her husband; in fact, technically, she would not even have been able to touch her own children. All this for 12 years!

What was the next great act of faith on her part?

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However secretly the woman sought to act, Jesus turned it into a public display. She told Him (and everyone listening) what had happened. By giving her own testimony, she did her first act as a disciple. Now that the whole event was known publicly, how much easier it would be for her to tell others about what Jesus had done for her. She had come to Jesus because she had heard about Him; she now could tell others about Him, as well.

Why must we continue to trust in the Lord even when healing, as or when we want it, does not come? If we stop trusting, what have we left?
Be glad you weren’t born a woman in Jesus’ day. The attitude toward women was not healthy. Perhaps a saying found in the deuterocanonical book of Ecclesiasticus says it best: “Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good” (42:14). The Mishnah remarks: “may the words of Torah be burned, than that they should be handed over to women” (Mark McFall).

Yet, for Jesus to come to this earth, this is exactly what had to happen: Jesus, the Living Word, was “handed over,” in the form of an embryo that was implanted by the Holy Spirit into the body of a woman. Augustine said that Mary first conceived Christ in her heart before she conceived Him in her womb. Likewise, we must be a vessel. Just as she offered her life, body and soul—“behold, the handmaiden of the Lord”—to give birth to Jesus, we must offer our lives, body and soul, to Him to give birth to His righteous character through our lives.

But how did Mary do this? What was her secret? She was not the daughter of Herod the king, or of a high priest, but an ordinary woman. Even the meaning of her name seems to dismiss her as a likely candidate for Jesus’ mom-to-be. But therein lies the marvel—and hints at hope for us. Just as her name means “rebellion, bitterness, trouble, and disobedience,” we are disobedient, troubled, and rebellious. It was only her submission to the will of God through faith that conceived the Child Jesus in her, just as our submission to Him will conceive His will in our lives. It is when we submit our rebellious natures to God that He brings forth the miracle of the new birth in us—“Immanuel,” God with us. We marvel at the biological miracle of the virgin birth. But is it any less of a miracle for us who are dead to experience the new birth in Christ?

Consider This: Why might God have chosen Mary? How would Jesus’ life have been different if Mary had been Herod’s daughter? How did this prepare Jesus for His lifework? What does Mary’s submission suggest about parenting as a form of discipleship?

II. The Women Who Followed Jesus (Read Luke 8:1–3 with your class.)

Mary Magdalene may have taken her name from the seaside town of Magdala, which means “tower” or “castle.” And if her past is any indication, it would have been a “haunted” tower or castle. And is it any wonder coming from a town like Magdala? The Talmud says it had an unsavory reputation for prostitution. It was also a town known for its dye works and had primitive textile factories. Mary may even have been
Troubled by Many Things

In order to be a disciple, we need to know Jesus personally. We must have a close relationship with Him. This can come only by spending time with Him. In our busy lives, with so many important things vying for our time, how easy it is to get caught up in things, even good and important things, and let our relationship with God slip.

Read Luke 10:38–42. How does this episode reveal how even good things can distract us from what is most important? What message for you can be found in the story of these two female “disciples”?

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Mary heard His word. No one can be a true disciple who does not hear His word. The text said, too, that she sat at His feet. First-century teachers sat on high stools while their students sat at their feet on lower stools or the floor. To sit at one’s feet means to adopt the posture of a disciple or learner. That she sat at Jesus’ feet meant that she was His student (compare Acts 22:3).

In contrast was her sister, Martha. The Greek text says that she was “drawn away” by much serving. In one sense, this could be understandable. After all, the Master had come to their house, so it was their responsibility to tend to their guests’ needs. At the same time, her plea that her sister help also echoed customary conventional values and expectations. Mary’s place was in the kitchen—the part of the household designated for women—not in the dining area with the men.

Yet, Jesus did not rebuke Mary; He chided Martha. He named her twice, perhaps showing concern. Martha’s complaints were justified, but Jesus’ rebuke reminds us there are issues more important than other necessary things. We all need to take heed, for sometimes we allow the urgent to crowd out the important or the good to exclude the vital and necessary.

How can you find the proper balance in your own life between things that must be done and spending time at the feet of Jesus? What adjustments might you need to make? At the same time, can one ever be too much like Mary and not enough like Martha? If so, how?
a dyer. While we do not know her profession for certain, we do know that Jesus cast demons out of her not once but seven times. Seven, of course, is a number that represents completeness. And this suggests that she was completely Satan’s or under his power before Christ made her completely His. What hope that should give us that no soul—even one that is sold completely over to the devil—cannot be freed by Jesus. And while her past was a dark and terrible thing, her life as a devoted follower of Christ became full of light and hope.

Mary was not the only one whose past was a dark and terrible thing. Luke tells us that there were other women—Joanna and Susanna—out of whom Jesus cast demons or healed from diseases. And in turn they supported His ministry. Think about what that entailed. As traveling evangelists on the road, Jesus and His crew incurred many expenses: water for drinking, washing, and laundry; the expense of clothing and mending. Joanna’s money and efforts would have gone to these items. We know that Joanna’s husband, Chuza, was Herod’s chief financial officer. That was a position of some prominence. Surely, the fact that Chuza’s wife was giving some of her money to support the “upstart Galilean” was not lost on Herod. Imagine the bravery that it took for Joanna, a lady of the court, to contribute to such a “disreputable” cause when the eyes of the court watched her every move.

We know even less about Susanna. Just her name. But its meaning, “a white lily,” reminds us of Christ’s words that the lilies of the field, without any effort on their own, are even more glorious than Solomon. There is a lesson there for us, as well. Any beauty, any purity we have, is Christ’s, and any goodness in us is not gotten through any effort of our own. Susanna had been healed both spiritually and physically by Christ, and she revealed her gratitude by seeing to the comfort and well-being of Jesus and His other disciples.

Consider This: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna saw to Jesus’ needs out of their own belongings. What precedence does this set for us today?

III. The Touch of Faith (Read Mark 5:25–34 with your class.)

Can’t stop a hemorrhage? Carry an ostrich egg wrapped up in a linen rag in the summer and a cotton one in winter. If that doesn’t work, carry a kernel of barley corn found in the dung of a white, female donkey—so says
The Woman at the Well

**Read** John 4:4–30. How did Jesus go about winning the confidence of this woman and, essentially, turning her into a disciple?

The process of winning the woman of Samaria deserves the most careful study on the part of all who set out to win others to Christ.

There were four main stages in this process: (1) The awakening of a desire for something better (vss. 7–15); (2) The awakening of a conviction of personal need (vss. 16–20); (3) The call for a decision to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah (vss. 21–26); (4) The stimulus to action appropriate to the decision (vss. 26–30, 39–42).

Imagine what must have gone on in the mind of this woman. First, this stranger, a Jew, shows her unexpected kindness. The next thing she knows, He reveals to her some of her deepest and darkest secrets, something that most likely no one but she knew. Her response, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet” (vs. 19), is a confession, not only of her own sins but that Jesus is Someone special. Notice, too, that when the woman sought to change the subject, Jesus did not press her anymore with her sins. Instead, He picked up on her conversation and used it to point to more truth, ultimately leading her back to Himself, this time not as a prophet but as the Messiah. Impressed by Jesus—no doubt mostly by His knowledge of her secrets—the woman believed Him.

**Look** at how she witnessed to her own people (vss. 29, 39). What so impressed her about Jesus? Might there not have been a bit of a confession in her own witness? How effective was this witness?

The Lord changed this woman, apparently no bastion of purity and piety, into a powerful witness for Himself. What lessons can you draw from this story about (1) not judging the hearts of others and (2) forgiveness and grace even for the worst of sinners?
the Talmud. No doubt the nameless woman who bled for 12 years had tried these remedies. No wonder she went broke, spending all her money on exotic ingredients. Unlike acne or hiccups, her disease made her a social leper. She was considered unclean. For 12 years she was shut off from the worship of God and the company of family and friends. Anything she touched was unclean, so she could touch no one. Imagine touching no one for 12 years. Until Jesus.

By touching Jesus, she would make Him unclean. That meant He would need to go to the temple and, at His expense, buy animals to sacrifice to make Himself clean again. Moreover, she was weak from losing so much blood for so long. She was too embarrassed to ask for His help. But her hands could reach for what her mouth could not ask for if He would just pass close enough to her.

**Consider This:** This woman came into direct contact with Jesus and was healed. What does it mean to touch Jesus as she did? Many suffer silently, too embarrassed to ask for help. How can we reach out to them?

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Thought Questions:**

When the woman touched Jesus, He felt power leave Him. What might that mean? What might this tell us about sacrifice and its role in discipleship?

**Application Questions:**

We’ve been taught to take everything we need or want to Jesus. But have you ever asked yourself, *What could I give Him?* Read this statement from *The Desire of Ages* to find out: “The Saviour is thirsting for recognition from those He has come to save.” Is it for Himself or for our good that He longs for us to know Him? How can we give Him this recognition?

**STEP 4—Apply!**

Think of the “wells” in your life where you met Jesus as did the Samaritan woman. What are some of these places, and how can you use them as opportunities to draw others to Christ?

“The ‘one thing’ that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the graces necessary for spiritual advancement. She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever. Jesus would teach His children to seize every opportunity of gaining that knowledge which will make them wise unto salvation.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 525.

“One of the characteristics of the Gospel of Luke is its frequent references to Christ’s ministry for the womenfolk of Palestine and the ministry of some of them on His behalf. This was something new, for the role of Jewish women in public life had been a relatively minor one, although in isolated instances, prophets like Elisha had ministered to women and been ministered to by them.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 769.

Discussion Questions:

1. Go back over the story of Mary being told about becoming Jesus’ mother. Again, think about what amazing things she was told to believe, things she could not possibly understand. Think about many of the things we Christians are told to believe that we cannot possibly understand. And though we do not understand them, we still have faith and even reasons to believe them. Bring your thoughts to class and, as a class, talk about these things and why we can and should believe them, regardless of what we do not understand. How can we help others who are struggling to believe in things that, in the end, have to be taken on faith?

2. At a time when, in most countries, the membership of the church seems to be predominantly female, why should the church not discourage female discipleship?

3. Jesus was revolutionary, transforming, liberating, innovative, restorative, sensitive, and supportive. No one was ignored, marginalized, or ostracized in His presence. Contemporary disciples should emulate Him and model His example for all classes, cultures, genders, peoples, and nations. How can you help your local church be a place where all are welcomed and can find a role in service?
SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22, RSV).

Jim felt called to take the gospel to a foreign country. Upon arrival, he discovered that the people had a test for foreigners to earn the right to stay among them. The foreigner had to swallow, and not regurgitate, a potion. If the person failed the test, he or she had to leave immediately; otherwise, they could be eaten by the tribe. Jim watched the tribe prepare the potion of milk, human saliva, blood, chewed-up herbs, and other herbal concoctions. It looked and smelled sickening. All he could do was pray—and drink. To everyone’s amazement (especially his own), Jim drank it and held it down, earning the right to remain.

Making disciples might require us to do strange things: eat or drink strange mixtures and be all things to all people so we can win some. This is the call and challenge of discipleship, especially as the gospel goes around the world and into cultures sometimes radically different from our own.

The Week at a Glance: What other examples do we have of Jesus ministering to others besides Jews? Who were the God-fearers, and what can we learn from them about discipleship? What can we learn today from the Antioch model of discipleship?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 9.
Disciples Among the Samaritans

**Look** up the following texts. What can we learn from them about God’s attitude toward all races and people? *John 1:3; Acts 10:28, 34, 35; 17:26–28; Heb. 2:9.*

Scripture is clear: Not only did Christ create all humanity, He died for all humanity as well, regardless of race, nationality, or ethnic origin. The universality of Christ’s death, the fact that His death was for every human being, should be more than enough to show us how repugnant prejudice is to God.

It is no wonder, then, that when Jesus was here, He ministered not just to the Jews but to non-Jews, as well. Though Paul is understood to be the *apostle to the Gentiles*, Jesus was already witnessing to them when here in the flesh.

**Read** Luke 17:11–16 and John 4:39–42. What is going on here? What message should we take away from these texts?

Last week’s lesson showed that the woman at the well left her water pots and went to invite the villagers to meet Jesus after He had told her everything she ever did. She even introduced the possibility of His being the Messiah. Scripture says that many of the villagers believed because of the woman’s testimony. When they met Jesus, they persuaded Him to stay, presumably to teach them.

The story of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–16) also speaks to Jesus’ work for Samaritans. The tenth leper, who returned to give thanks, was a Samaritan. By praising God in a loud voice, he showed his gratefulness for what Jesus had done for him. Jesus told this Samaritan that his faith had made him well. The Greek word used for this healing denotes the idea of being saved. This implies that the Samaritan’s faith had saved him not only physically but spiritually. Jesus also called the Samaritan a foreigner. Despite knowing him to be a Samaritan and a foreigner, Jesus did not discriminate against him but rewarded his faith. These encounters show that Jesus did not conform to the prejudices of His time.

It is one thing to say we should not harbor prejudice against anyone; it is another, actually, to be free of these poisonous emotions. What practical steps can you take to help break the bonds of prejudice in your own heart?
**The Lesson in Brief**

**Key Text:** Matthew 15:21–28

**The Student Will:**
- **Know:** Identify how the gospel breaks all racial barriers.
- **Feel:** Sense complete dependence on His grace to overcome hatred.
- **Do:** Resolve to overcome all obstacles through faith in Jesus.

**Learning Outline:**

I. **Know: Jesus Breaks Down Barriers**
   - **A** Why does the woman call Jesus the Son of David? What does this suggest she knows?
   - **B** How does Jesus react to her request? Why does she refuse to be discouraged?
   - **C** This woman doesn’t ask for a loaf of bread or even the crusts. She asks for crumbs that fall to the master’s dogs. Notice the implications. She accepts she is a dog—a heathen. But she asserts she is the Master’s dog. Look where the dog is positioned to get the scraps—it is *sitting at its master’s feet*, the posture of a disciple. What is she suggesting? What shows that Jesus accepts her?

II. **Feel: The Canaanite’s Need**
   - **A** The Jews detested the Canaanites of all races. In His first interaction with the Canaanite woman, Jesus appears to share these views. Did He? What might have been His purpose in appearing to do so?
   - **B** What indicates the disciples shared the prejudices of their time? What changed them? Why?

III. **Do: Persevere in Faith**
   - **A** How does the Canaanite woman teach us the importance of persevering in our faith, no matter what the obstacles?
   - **B** Who is overlooked in our efforts to share the gospel? How is withholding bread from others starving ourselves? What can we do to change this?

**Summary:** The gospel embraces all people.
The God-Fearers

In the first century, some Gentiles were called God-fearers. They nominally accepted Judaism, made gifts to synagogues, and attended Sabbath services. They did not, however, submit to proselyte baptism or adopt all the rabbinic regulations. One such God-fearer was the centurion of Luke 7:1–11.

Read Luke 7:1–11. From these texts, what can we learn about the faith and character of this Gentile disciple?

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For Jesus, the faith of this centurion “was an earnest of the work which the gospel was to accomplish among the Gentiles. With joy He looked forward to the gathering of souls from all nations to His kingdom.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 317.

Acts 10 mentions another Roman official. Cornelius was a devout God-fearer and a centurion. He was generous to the needy and prayed earnestly to God. God sent an angel to inform him of the acceptance of his gifts and prayers and sent him in search of Peter. Peter went to his home, contrary to Jewish scruples, and was even reprimanded for it. But God told him not to call common or unclean those, like Cornelius, whom He had cleansed.

As Peter preached to Cornelius’s assembled household (Acts 10:44–46), the Holy Spirit interrupted him with the Gentile Pentecost, to the amazement of his Jewish companions.

Read Acts 11:1–3. What was the reaction of the Jewish followers of Jesus? What makes that reaction so shocking to us today? What message can we take away from their actions?

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Here they were, themselves followers of Jesus, yet not understanding the fullness of the gospel. How careful we should be not to allow any cultural, educational, or social influences contrary to the principles of Christ to hinder us from living to the fullest the profession we claim for ourselves.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Key Concept: Jesus’ death on the cross for everyone shows us we must not exclude anyone in our efforts to win souls to Him.

A Hindu priest of the goddess Kali lay dying. None of the other priests would touch him. He served in a temple for the goddess in the poorest section of Calcutta. It was a slum where some of the people were too sick to beg. Others had no clothes and were ashamed to beg naked in the streets. Still others were dying of loathsome diseases that caused their loved ones to turn their backs on them. Now this priest had become one of those people.

A nun had also chosen to live there, among the poorest of the poor—the untouchables, those with leprosy, those too sick to beg for food or who had no clothes to wear. She converted an abandoned Hindu temple into a free hospice for the poorest of the poor. The priests at the nearby Kali temple in the city were not pleased when the Albanian nun and her sisters began their work. But then the nun was told that one of the Kali temple priests who had opposed her was dying of a contagious disease. His body was skeletal. She gathered him in her arms and took him to her home. After this, the local people asked the nun known to the world as Mother Teresa to stay. A Hindu priest of the temple of the goddess Kali said to her, “‘For thirty years I have worshiped the goddess Kali in stone, but today the goddess Mother stands before me alive.’”

Consider This: Who are the forgotten groups in your society? What are we doing to reach out to those who need us as a community or a church? What did the Hindu priest mean when he said that he worshiped the goddess Kali in stone for 30 years but now she was alive before him? How can we make Christ come alive for those we reach out to?

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. The Samaritan Leper (Read Luke 17:11–16 with your class.)

A band of lepers lived on the border between Samaria and Galilee. They
The Canaanite

At one point in His ministry, Jesus withdrew to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. He had to, in a sense, get out of town because things were getting tense with the leaders. In this Gentile territory He entered a house but did not want anyone to know it (Mark 7:24). Yet, a Canaanite woman soon found Him.

Read Matthew 15:21–28 and answer the following questions:

1. Why did the woman call Jesus by a Messianic name, “Son of David”? What did that imply concerning her knowledge of Jesus?

2. How did His disciples react to her, and why was that typical of them?

3. What kind of appeal did she make? How helpless is she?

4. What things happened that should have discouraged her but did not?

Despite coming from a despised nation that had a long history of enmity with Israel, despite being ignored at first by Jesus, despite the attitude of the disciples, even despite Christ’s own words to her at first, she knew that Jesus was her only hope. Perhaps it was a tenacity born out of desperation. Who knows? But in the end, we are all just as dependent upon Christ, whether we acknowledge it or not.

Jesus also has a powerful lesson for His own disciples. Christ’s purpose was to teach them about the need to work for non-Jews, and this He did by acting out the contrast between the usual attitudes and His own. These Twelve had a lot to learn about what it meant to be disciples.

Look again at this woman. What can we learn from her attitudes, actions, words, and faith that can make us better disciples?
may have shared a crude hut out in an open field far from the closest village. What made these lepers unique was that one of them was a Samaritan and the rest were Jews. Suddenly, when you have leprosy, no one cares if you’re Jew or Samaritan; you’re still unclean. Their shared tragedy broke down the racial barriers between them. These were men who knew they were in need. And their need for healing drew them all together.

The law forbade them from approaching the clean, thus barring them from the presence of Jesus. But the combined sound of their voices crossed the distance that separated them from Him. Jesus was on the final journey that would take Him to His death. The momentousness of what He was about to do must have been weighing on Him. Every step closer to Jerusalem was one step closer to the cross. But He still made time for those who were suffering.

Imagine that you are the Samaritan leper, listening to Jesus’ instructions to go present yourself to the priests. There’s little doubt as to which priests He is referring to. There’s no love lost between your nation and the Jewish nation. So, it must have taken a greater act of faith for this despised Samaritan to start walking toward the temple than for the other nine lepers. But his healing is a rebuke to the priests who not only believe Jesus is not the Messiah but who have despised the Samaritans. By healing him Jesus is telling the world that His grace is for all people. No wonder the Samaritan leper turned back to Jesus after he was healed and fell at His feet and worshiped Him. This man wasn’t just thanking Jesus for healing him; he was thanking Him for giving him the gift of eternal life, which the Jews had felt the Samaritans did not deserve.

Consider This: What is the significance of where the lepers lived between the borders of Galilee and Samaria? How does sin make us lepers? Why is Jesus the only cure? The lepers were not cured in Jesus’ presence, but only after they moved away from Him in faith. What is the lesson here for us about doing God’s work? What barriers did Jesus tear down in healing this Samaritan leper, and what can we learn from His methods?

II. The Syro-Phoenician Woman *(Read Matthew 15:21–28 with your class.)*

The problem with Jesus, if you asked His disciples, was that He gave away the gifts of heaven too freely to those who weren’t worthy. And in their minds Jesus couldn’t have chosen a worse person than the Syro-Phoenician woman. His kindness to the Samaritans was bad enough.
Philip and the Ethiopian Official

One of the most fascinating stories about discipleship is found in Acts 8:26–40. It is the story of Philip and the eunuch.

Read the whole story (Acts 8:26–40) and answer the following questions:

1. What indications show us that this man already had some knowledge of truth and was a seeker after truth?

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2. What role did the Scriptures play in his becoming a disciple?

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3. What can we learn about discipleship from the role of Philip in this story? What characteristics did Philip show that made him such an effective witness for the Lord?

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In this story, providence played a powerful role, did it not? After obeying the angel, Philip met the eunuch on the road. Interesting, too, that Philip was to go from Jerusalem to Gaza (what symbolism do you see there?). The Ethiopian was, apparently, another God-fearer. He also just happened to be reading the Bible, and not only the Scriptures but Isaiah, and not only Isaiah but the greatest Messianic prophecy in all the Bible, chapter 53. This chapter, of course, depicts Christ’s substitutionary death for us. Then, after Philip explained to him the meaning of the Scripture, they came to a certain water, and the eunuch wanted to be baptized. Everything fell right into place.

Read Acts 8:39. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing, surely about His newfound discovery of Jesus’ dying for His sins. We say that faith is not feeling and that we need to maintain faith even when we feel bad. At the same time, why should we, as disciples who have been forgiven our sins through the death of Jesus, always have a place in our heart for rejoicing, regardless of our immediate circumstances?
But at least He didn’t actually perform a miracle for them, and they did believe in the law of Moses. And the centurion whose servant He healed had built a synagogue for the Jews. But the Syro-Phoenician didn’t have the mind to appreciate the gospel. She was a heathen, a foreigner, a stranger, and a female on top of that. Her race didn’t even believe in the true God. What right did she have to ask anything of Jesus? One rabbi wrote that hell was the only destiny of the Gentiles. Josephus, writing about the Phoenicians, said that of all the heathen races, the Canaanites bore the Israelites the most ill will. After all, Israel took their ancestral land from them during the time of Joshua. Certainly there was no love lost between their races.

Jesus read the hearts of His disciples. In their minds, she was no better than a dog, one of those kunaria, the wild mongrels that roamed the streets scrounging for scraps to steal. How their hearts must have thrilled when He used that very word to describe her when He said, “Why should I take the bread from the children and give it to the dogs?” But the word He used for dog was not the same as theirs. He used the word for the domesticated dogs that sat at the feet of their masters. The disciples were so blinded by their prejudice they failed to discern the compassion in Jesus’ voice. But the Syro-Phoenician woman heard it. Her own gods had failed her. She had heard rumors of the great Healer that even the demons obeyed. His words gave her hope. She accepted she was a dog—but she was His dog. She did not ask for a loaf of bread or even for a slice. She begged only the crumbs at His feet. To gather them at His feet made even a “dog” a disciple.

Jesus treated her as the disciples would have so that when He granted her request, contrary to their expectations, they would see how evil their prejudice was. By ministering to this woman, He taught them a valuable lesson. Race is no barrier to the gospel, which is meant for all people. And as His disciples they must minister to both Jew and Gentile, for He was not just the Savior of the Jews but of the whole world.

**Consider This:** What method did Jesus use to show His disciples their prejudice? Was it effective? What does Jesus’ granting of the Phoenician woman’s request reveal about God’s attitude toward caste and racism?

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Witnessing**

*Make my eyes blue.*

Maybe you haven’t wanted blue eyes but who hasn’t, at one time,
The Antioch Church

The persecution that followed the stoning of Stephen and the pre-conversion activities of Saul of Tarsus took the gospel to many lands. Among the places it went was Syrian Antioch, where the first organized presentation of the gospel for Gentiles occurred. Luke says that the Lord was with this initiative and that “a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21, NIV). So phenomenal was the growth that the Jerusalem leaders sent Barnabas to assist them.

Upon his arrival, Barnabas secured the help of Saul of Tarsus for this discipleship mission. This had a positive effect on the church. It not only caused the church to grow but also gave it a sense of social concern, stewardship, and mission.

Read Acts 11:25–30. What were the issues? How did the church respond? What lessons can we take away from this account for our mission today?

Notice, too, that when Paul and Barnabas got to Antioch, they taught much people for a year. What should that tell us about the importance of teaching in the question of discipleship?

Acts 13:1–3 reveals more about the makeup of the early church. We know that Barnabas was a Cypriot Jew; Saul, of course, came from Tarsus, another city that was not part of Israel proper. Manaen was either a good friend or foster-brother of Herod Antipas. Simeon was called Niger, the Latin word for “black.” Lucius hailed from Cyrene in North Africa. This means that the leadership of the church was ethnically diverse, with some of the leaders not being Jews at all.

These leaders took their discipleship seriously. They worshiped the Lord with fasting and prayer. It was to this church, one that took discipleship seriously, that the Spirit revealed God’s will for missions. Saul and Barnabas were commissioned and consecrated to take the gospel to the ends of the earth in fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

Thus we see in these texts mission, teaching, consecration, and dedication of both Jew and Gentile, as the cornerstones of discipleship.

The needs of others present the church with great opportunities for service and witness. No doubt there are a great many needs around you. How well have you taken advantage of these needs to serve others and to witness to them about Jesus?
Learning Cycle continued

wanted to be different?

Amy, the Irish girl who asked God for blue eyes, grew up without ever getting her wish and went to India as a missionary. She saw young girls who were unwanted by their families and were sold to the temples as prostitutes for the priests. She knew then what God had wanted her to do. She dyed her hair and skin with coffee. She wore saris to fit in with the people and started a home for these unwanted girls. “An Irish with brown eyes,” an Indian friend of hers once said. “It is a good thing. I don’t think you could save these girls if your eyes were blue.” Amy knew now why God had given her brown eyes instead of blue. As Paul says in the memory verse for this week, “I became all things to all men so that by doing so I could save some.” Amy Carmichael did not just go to India to live, she became an Indian. This was something Amy felt she could not have done so fully if God had given her blue eyes instead of brown. Two thousand years before, Jesus also became like the outcasts He was trying to save by taking our bodies, skin, hair, and eyes.

Consider This: Think about the things in your life that you have wished were different. How has God used the things we cannot change to make us a blessing and to bring about positive change in the lives of others?

Like Amy, we may have had to change things about ourselves to reach some, becoming, as Paul said, “all things to all men” so that some can be saved. God may not be calling us to dye our skin as Amy did, but in what ways can we practice the truth of this in our lives?

STEP 4—Apply!

Consider these questions with your class as a way of taking steps to break down barriers that exist within your church:

1. Do converts feel comfortable within the structure of our church?
2. Do we have a system whereby new people can make new friends within six months of joining our church?
3. Do new members have someone to sit with them and orient them to the church ceremonies and services?
4. Does our church have a receptionist system at the church door that knows how to say hello without saying goodbye?

“He [the Centurion] had not seen the Saviour, but the reports he heard had inspired him with faith. Notwithstanding the formalism of the Jews, this Roman was convinced that their religion was superior to his own. Already he had broken through the barriers of national prejudice and hatred that separated the conquerors from the conquered people. He had manifested respect for the service of God, and had shown kindness to the Jews as His worshipers. In the teaching of Christ, as it had been reported to him, he found that which met the need of the soul. All that was spiritual within him responded to the Saviour’s words.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 315.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **Look more closely at the Antioch model. What things could your local church learn from this model that could make it a more effective witness for Christ?**

2. **As a church, the Adventists are very good at getting people to join, as our growing numbers of baptisms prove. We are, though, struggling with the question of discipleship, the question of what to do with these people after we baptize them. As we know, far too many who join soon leave. What are your own thoughts on this problem? What has been your experience with being discipled after you were baptized and joined the church? What do you wish might have been done differently with you? What do you think your local church could do, must do, to disciple new members better? Be prepared to talk about this issue in your Sabbath School class.**

3. **The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53. Go over the chapter and review what it tells us about the death of Jesus on our behalf. What does the text tell us that Jesus did for us? What hope does it offer? Why is it so important to keep His death for us at the forefront of all our witnessing? Why is it so important that we keep the Cross at the front and center of all our discipling, as well?**
Preparation for Discipleship

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matthew 5–7; 10:1, 10:5–11:1; Mark 3:1–19; Luke 6:12–16.

Memory Text: “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16, NRSV).

A disciple is a learner/follower of Jesus Christ who constantly seeks to become like the Master. Just as Jesus trained and sent out His disciples, every local church must inaugurate an effective program for the facilitating, encouraging, and developing of disciples. After all, what good does it do us if the folks we baptize soon leave? We are not being faithful to our Divine commission, because Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19); yet, the word translated “teach” comes from the Greek word that also means “to make a disciple.” (Indeed, numerous versions translate it in that manner.)

This week we will look at preparation for discipleship.

The Week at a Glance: How did Jesus prepare His disciples? What principles can we learn for ourselves regarding discipleship from what He said to them before sending them out? What can we learn from the Sermon on the Mount that is crucial for discipleship? What kind of opposition should disciples of Christ expect?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 16.
The Appointing of the Apostles

Mark 3 begins with Jesus entering a synagogue and healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, one of His famous Sabbath healings. A great irony is found in these texts (Mark 3:1–12): The rulers sought how they might kill Him, while great multitudes of people flocked after Him. One group feared His power; another coveted to be blessed and benefited by it.

Read Mark 3:13–18. What was happening here? See also Luke 6:12–16.

From both accounts, it seems that at some point Jesus got away from the great multitude that followed Him, taking with Him a select group of disciples. From among this group of disciples, He then picked out twelve to do the work of apostles.

For this task, Jesus chose the ones He wanted. This implies, as we have seen, that the initiative resides with Him. He extends the call; we respond. This means that we must be available for service, in whatever capacity we are called to serve in.

How do disciples and apostles differ? Disciples were learners. They followed a master to study with that master. The term apostle comes from two Greek words, apo and stello, implying “to send from.” An apostle was an ambassador or emissary sent to represent a master or a kingdom. While both a disciple and an apostle are students, an apostle received additional training to be sent forth as a representative of the master or organization.

Jesus appointed the Twelve so that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. Matthew says that, He “gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matt. 10:1, NIV). It appears He chose them to provide trained workers to assist in caring for the large throngs that flocked wherever He went (adapted from The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 322).

How content are you with the work that you are doing for the Lord? Should you be doing more? Could you be doing more? What is holding you back? In most cases, is it not your own pride and selfishness?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** Matthew 7:1–5

**The Student Will:**
- **Know:** Discuss how God judges us by how we judge others.
- **Feel:** Cultivate a desire to be merciful instead of judgmental.
- **Do:** Choose to leave the judging to God.

**Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: Judge Not**

- **A** What does it mean not to judge?
- **B** What warning is Jesus giving in the Sermon on the Mount about judging that is essential for all disciples to understand? How does it teach us to follow Christ more successfully?
- **C** What does the “plank” in our eye suggest happens to our vision the moment we shift our focus away from our own weakness to the weakness of others?

**II. Feel: The Mercy of Jesus**

- **A** The Bible talks about two kinds of judging. One is condoned, the other condemned. What is the difference between a judgmental attitude and true discernment?
- **B** How does faultfinding snuff out mercy?

**III. Do: Taking Out the Plank**

- **A** What can we do to change a faultfinding spirit?
- **B** Notice Jesus uses the word *brother*—not *enemy* or *stranger*—to refer to the person being judged. In light of this, how should we treat church members who have made mistakes?
- **C** Jesus doesn’t say we can’t help remove the speck out of a brother’s eye. We just need to remove the larger obstruction in our own first. How does He help us to do that?

**Summary:** Looking at others’ faults blinds us to their spiritual needs—and our own.
The Sermon on the Mount

Many see the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) as Jesus’ inaugural address, in which He outlined the ethics of His kingdom. It is also, in many ways, a manifesto of discipleship, for it holds the keys to being a faithful disciple of Christ.

Read Matthew 5:1. What was the background of the sermon? To whom did He immediately give it?

Who knows how many books have been written expounding upon this sermon? For our purposes, we want to look at what things in it are especially pertinent to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Read Matthew 5:13–16. What is the message there for us, as disciples of Christ? Why are these words particularly important to us as Adventists, given our understanding of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–12?

Read Matthew 6:5–13. What important lesson is Jesus giving us here for discipleship?

Read Matthew 6:19–21. Why are these words, in many ways, the essence of what true discipleship is about? Ask yourself, “Where is my treasure [That is, where is my heart?], in heaven or on earth?” If you do not like the answer, what can you do to change?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

What happens once an individual becomes a disciple? What is his or her commission? The answer can be found in Matthew 28:19, which tells us to go and make disciples of others, baptize them, and teach them.

Consider This: Is everyone called to be a disciple, or must individuals have certain qualifications to be called to discipleship? (See Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15.)

One of the functions of the church—the group of believers who have already responded to the call to follow Christ—is to go into all the world, to every nation and to all people, and make more disciples. I tell someone, and that someone tells someone else, and that someone tells another someone, and so on. . . .

But just like the first disciples of Christ, those who are called must go through a training process so that they can effectively reach others. The first step in this process is for an individual to recognize the call to discipleship. In many cases, people join the church and don’t even realize that they have been called to discipleship—to service. They join a group of believers with the desire to be fed rather than the determination to feed. It is the responsibility of the church to help new believers understand that they have been called to service.

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. Fishers of Men

When Jesus called the first disciples, He said that He would make them fishers of men (Matt. 4:19). They were to go and draw others to Christ, making more disciples, who would then go and draw others to Christ. But before they could be effective, the disciples spent some time with Jesus, observing and learning just what it was that they were called to do.
The Sermon on the Mount (Continued)

As said in a previous lesson, one of the greatest struggles we face as a church is retaining new members, keeping them in the flock after we baptize them. All this is linked with the theme of discipleship, the theme of teaching people what it means to be a follower of Christ, a citizen in His new kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with illustrations and teachings that all disciples of Christ must learn to follow. As we continue studying the sermon, ask yourself, “How can I apply these teachings in my own life? Also, how can our church better teach these things to new members, to make them better disciples of Christ?”

Read Matthew 7:1–5. What important lesson, and warning, is given there that is crucial for all disciples of Christ to learn? What does it mean not to judge?

Read Matthew 7:15–20. What message is Jesus giving to His disciples here? As you read these texts, ask yourself, “What kind of fruit am I, myself, bearing?”

It is one thing to profess being a follower, a student, or a disciple of Christ; it is another to be one. As we seek to make disciples, or to be good disciples ourselves, we must not forget the clear words of Jesus in the following texts.

Read Matthew 7:24–27. Why is it important to understand what Jesus is saying there? What issues are, literally, at stake here? How do we understand these words with the other Bible promises of salvation being by faith and not by works?
Consider This: What are some of the things the disciples learned by following and observing the Savior? (Matt. 10:16; 10:37; 12:1, 2, 8–12; 17:20, 21; Acts 10:34, 35.)

What kind of programs can be implemented in the churches today to prepare individuals for discipleship?

II. Freely Give

We learned earlier that becoming a part of the body of Christ—the church—is a call to service. We don’t become Christ’s followers just to receive; we become His followers to give—to give of our time, our talents, our prayers, and our resources. In the words of Jesus Himself, “freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8).

Consider This: Are all of Christ’s disciples expected to do the same things, or does the capacity in which we serve depend on our various talents and abilities? Is one person called to do one thing, while another person is called to do something else? Discuss your answers with the class. (See Romans 12:4–8.)

III. Prepare Ye the Way

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1, NKJV).

Just like the disciples of old, the followers of Jesus today are to prepare the way of the Lord. We are to proclaim to others that He is coming and to encourage all to be ready to meet Him when He does.

Consider This: Below is a list of some of the things the first disciples were called to do. How many of the things on the list are we called to do today? Are there things that the first disciples did that we cannot do today?

- Raise the dead (Matt. 10:8)
- Cast out demons (Matt. 10:8)
- Baptize and make new disciples (Matt. 28:19)
- Preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:31)
- Heal the sick (Acts 3:1–9)
- Minister to the poor (Gal. 2:10)
Instructions for a Missionary Tour

Jesus’ promise that His disciples would be fishers of men (Matt. 4:19) was not immediately fulfilled. At first they observed His activities. While ministering in Galilee “preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness,” He saw the crowds and had compassion on them, “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:35, 36, NIV). He commented to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” and invited them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers (vs. 37, NIV).

Read Jesus’ words to the Twelve (Matt. 10:1, Matt 10:5–11:1). What principles are found in these words that would apply to us today in our work of seeking to make disciples?

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There is a lot that Christ’s modern-day disciples could learn from these texts. One thing, however, that should come through clearly is that witnessing for Christ is not going to be easy. There is going to be opposition, turmoil, and even, in some cases, persecution. Thus, we should not be surprised when these things come. What should concern us is when they do not.

Read again the texts for today. What kind of opposition, turmoil, and suffering should we expect? In what ways have you experienced in your own life some of what Jesus said here almost two thousand years ago?

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Jesus did not promise His disciples an easy time of it. The history of the church proves just how accurate His words were. Yet, at the same time, even amid these warnings, the Lord gives these men wonderful words of encouragement and hope. Read those words, those promises, and claim them for yourself. What can you take from them that you need in particular for yourself right now?
• Comfort and exhort one another (*Heb. 3:13*)
• Help the fatherless and widows (*James 1:27*)

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Thought Questions:**

1. Do you consider yourself a disciple of Christ? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

2. What can you personally do to prepare yourself for discipleship?

3. If you are not now active in your church or community, can you think of a ministry that you can join or personally initiate to become an active disciple?

4. Is it really necessary for those who follow Christ to go through a training process to prepare them for discipleship? If so, why? If not, explain your answer.

5. What criteria, if any, is used to determine when a new believer is ready for service in the church or in the field (community)?

**Application Question:**

Considering the following texts (*Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15, 16; John 8:31; John 15:8*), can you be a Christian without being a disciple?

**Witnessing**

Discipleship is a function of every Christian. Those who choose to follow Christ have been called not only to follow but also to serve. As we witness to others about the good news of the gospel—that Jesus came to save
Mission of the Seventy

Luke alone mentions that Jesus appointed seventy disciples, whom He sent on a missionary tour (Luke 10:1–23; see also Exod. 24:1, 9). In many ways, His instructions were similar to what He gave to the Twelve. After instructing them, Jesus sent them two by two to the towns and places He was about to visit. It appears that their mission was preparatory to Jesus’ own. In a sense, they were to prepare the way for people to accept Jesus when He came. How does that fit in with what we are to do today in helping prepare people to meet Jesus?

What was the advantage of sending them two by two? What can we take from that for ourselves today?

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Luke 10:17 says the Seventy returned from their mission with joy because “the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” No doubt, they must have been thrilled at the power given them through Jesus, and they acknowledge that it is His power. Jesus, though, while acknowledging the power given them, tells them to rejoice about the thing that really matters.

Read Luke 10:20. Why did Jesus say this? What message is there for us in these words, as well?

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Doing great deeds in the name of Jesus is no guarantee of salvation (Matt. 7:22, 23), as some will one day find out. Spiritual position, church authority, even great success at winning souls, are not the things that really matter. What really matters is having our names written in heaven, names that are not blotted out (Rev. 3:5), because a name written in heaven means eternal life through Jesus.

We can be so busy working for others that we neglect our own spiritual life and health. How can you avoid falling into that subtle trap? At the same time, how does working for the salvation of others strengthen your own walk with Jesus?
them—we must also tell them of their calling to become His disciples.

**STEP 4—Apply!**

“He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” *(Luke 5:16, NKJV)*. Christ is our perfect Example in all things. Prayer was His connection to His Father. It was His lifeline. In the same way, prayer is our connection to the heavenly Father, to the Savior. It is our lifeline. Without prayer, we have no power.

The disciples of old had Jesus in the flesh. We have Jesus by faith, through His indwelling Spirit. As we commune with Him in prayer, we become more cognizant of His continuing presence in our lives.

To be effective disciples, we need to have a connection with the Lord, who will enable us to do all of the things that a disciple is called to do (witness, baptize, heal, comfort, exhort, teach, preach, etc.). As we continue in prayer and the study of God’s Word, we will be continually in His presence.

**Consider This:** How much time do you spend in prayer? Why is prayer an essential part of discipleship? Bible study is also essential for the followers of Christ. How do Bible study and prayer go hand in hand? Can you have one without the other?

“ ‘If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them’ ” *(Matt. 18:19, 20, NKJV)*.

Prayer is not only essential for each individual, but it is also necessary for the strength of the church as a whole. It is vital for members of the church family to come together as a group or in small bands to spend time in prayer. Jesus tells us that it is only through prayer and fasting that we will have faith that is strong enough to move mountains *(Matt. 17:20, 21)*.

- Is fasting still necessary today? What does fasting teach us?

- Are prayer, fasting, and Bible study integral parts of your church group? If so, give some examples. Show how these things prepare individuals, including new believers, for discipleship.

Invite a class member to close with prayer.

“In that brief verse [Matthew 5:1] there are three clues to the real significance of the Sermon on the Mount. (i) Jesus began to teach *when he had sat down*. When a Jewish Rabbi was teaching officially he sat to teach. . . . So, then, the very intimation that Jesus sat down to teach his disciples is the indication that this teaching is central and official. (ii) Matthew goes on to say that *when he had opened His mouth*, he taught them. . . . In Greek the phrase has a double significance. (a) In Greek it is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. . . . (b) It is used of a person’s utterance when he is really opening his heart and fully pouring out his mind. It is used of intimate teaching with no barriers between. . . . (iii) . . . Now the point is that in the Greek of this sentence, which we are studying, the verb *taught* is not an *aorist* [tense], but an *imperfect* and therefore it describes repeated and habitual action, and the translation should be: ‘This is what he used to teach them.’ Matthew has said as plainly as Greek will say it that the Sermon on the Mount is not one sermon of Jesus, given at one particular time and on one particular occasion; it is the essence of all that Jesus continuously and habitually taught his disciples.” —William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 86, 87.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of discipleship program does your own local church have? What are its strong points? Its weak points? What practical steps can your church make to be stronger in the area of discipleship?

2. When a person joins your local church, what can you do, personally, to help disciple that person along? What specific gifts might you have that can be of help? Also, what about your Sabbath School class itself? What role can and should it have in the discipling process?

3. Discipling takes disciples, those who know what it means to follow Jesus, to learn from Jesus, to be an imitator of Jesus. What did you learn this week from the texts we looked at that, if applied in your life, could make you better prepared to disciple new members?
Experiencing Discipleship

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 17:1–13; 18:1–4, 24; Mark 8:27–30; John 6:43–58.

Memory Text: “And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

All through the Gospels, all through the stories of Jesus as recorded there, we can find material that will help us understand what it means to be a disciple.

As we read, one point should come through again and again: Discipleship is an experience. To be a true follower of Christ, we need to have an experience with Jesus. We need to know Jesus; we need to have been changed by Jesus; we need to partake of Jesus and what He offers us.

Head knowledge is not enough; being able to recite Bible texts is not enough; knowing doctrines is not enough. To be a disciple of Christ, you must have had a personal experience with Him, one that has changed and is still changing your life.

This week’s lesson will help us better understand what some of these experiences must entail.

The Week at a Glance: What does it mean to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ? What lessons about faith can we learn from the Transfiguration? Why does Jesus tell us we must become as little children? What does it mean to bear our cross for Jesus?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 23.
The Bread of Life

**Read** John 6:43–58. What important spiritual lesson is Jesus giving here? Why is what Jesus says here so important for all would-be disciples? Why are the truths here so important for those who seek to disciple others?

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It is no coincidence that Jesus expressed these words not long after the miracle of feeding the five thousand *(John 6:1–14)*. The response of the people, however, showed that their hearts were still set on worldly things, that they saw Jesus as a worldly king, one who could meet their temporal needs. That is not why Jesus came; that was not His primary purpose.

**What** did the texts for today tell us the purpose of Jesus’ coming was?

*See also* John 6:26, 27.

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“To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 389.

**What has been your own experience in eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus?** How do you do this, and what changes has this brought to your life? Be prepared to talk about your answer in class.
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: John 6:47–51

The Student Will:

Know: Recognize that what food is to the body, Jesus is to the soul.
Feel: Foster a desire to allow nothing to take Christ’s place in our lives.
Do: Determine to receive Christ into the heart, so He may live out His life through us.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Jesus, the Bread of Life
   A Clear that Communion—eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ—is symbolic. Symbolic of what? Why did He use this startling, even disturbing, image?
   B How do we “eat” His body and “drink” His blood?
   C How does the miracle of feeding the five thousand give special significance to Jesus’ words that He is the Bread of Life?

II. Feel: Christ in the Heart
   A Why is the Communion truth so important for disciples? Why is it essential for those who seek to bring others to Jesus?
   B How can we tell if His life has become our life and that His love and grace have been assimilated?

III. Do: Feeding on Jesus
   A An apple does your body no good on a plate. How does a relationship with Christ work the same way? What does our daily need for food tell us of our daily need for Jesus?
   B How do we keep from treating the Bread of Life as though He were merely something to alleviate temporal needs instead of Someone that enables us to be living bread to others?

Summary: Just as the body needs food and water, the soul needs Christ in order to live.
Children and Discipleship

In Matthew 18:1, the disciples came to Jesus, wondering who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Why would they be asking such a question? Parallel accounts show that the disciples were, in fact, fighting among themselves over which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of God (Mark 9:33, 34; Luke 9:46–48). This not only showed insensitivity but demonstrated the disciples’ poor understanding of the principles of humility and love, key elements of Jesus’ kingdom.

How did Jesus answer them? Matt. 18:1–4. What is it about children that make them such good examples of discipleship?

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Think about the importance of what Jesus is saying. Unless we are converted, unless we become as little children, we shall not enter His kingdom. In other words, we shall be lost!

There are a number of ways to look at what Jesus said. Perhaps the key word in these texts is humble. As disciples, we must be humble, like children. We must realize our total need and dependency on God our Father, just as children realize their need of their own parents. Children cannot survive on their own; we cannot survive without God. And it is so crucial that we recognize our need. Sin began on earth with Adam and Eve thinking that they could do things their own way, apart from God.

Children often believe, even without full understanding, what we tell them. In the same way, how often must we learn to believe and trust, without full understanding, what the Lord tells us? If we have to have everything about Jesus and salvation explained to us fully before we will believe, we will never be saved, because we will never believe. We must have the conversion that Jesus talked about, and conversion involves becoming like children, believing in what we do not fully understand. Plus, if we fully understood, then where would be the role of faith?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

“‘He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him’” (John 6:56, NKJV).

Discuss the spiritual application of this verse with your class. Those who accept Christ as their personal Savior believe that His body was crucified for them and His blood was shed for them. It’s personal. He died to blot out my sins. And when I abide in Him—remain in Him—I am symbolically eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Disciples of today abide in Christ on a daily basis, just as the disciples of old stayed with Jesus every day and followed Him wherever He went.

We abide in Christ through the power of His indwelling Spirit, through prayer and meditation on the Word of God, by daily surrender to His will, and by answering the call to service. The outward evidence of abiding in Christ (eating His flesh and drinking His blood) is that we will bear much fruit—the fruit of His Spirit (John 15:5; Gal. 5:22, 23).

Consider This: Why does Jesus use the analogy of eating His flesh and drinking His blood to show the importance of abiding in Him? See John 15:5.

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Just as our physical bodies cannot survive without food and water, we cannot survive spiritually without Christ. Without Him we can do nothing. The characteristics of Jesus must permeate the whole being, just as the nutrients and minerals of food and water saturate the cells of body tissues. Disciples must feed on Jesus.

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. As Little Children

“‘Unless you . . . become as little children, you will . . . [not] enter the
The Transfiguration and Failure

One of the most amazing experiences recorded in the Gospels is what is called the Transfiguration, in which God manifested His presence in a remarkable way before the eyes of some of Christ’s disciples.

Read Matthew 17:1–13. What three specific things happened that should have done much to strengthen the faith of the disciples?

1. ______________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________

Jesus never calls us to discipleship, to being a follower, without giving us reasons to believe. Not everything, of course, is answered, but we are given enough reasons to have faith, enough reasons to believe even in what we do not fully understand. And though we might not witness the kind of things that the three did on the mountain, as disciples of Christ we have been given enough for us to trust in the Lord and in His goodness. What we do with that faith, that gift (John 1:9, Eph. 2:8), will determine whether it grows, stagnates, or dies away.

The disciples had the great privilege of seeing things that most of us in this world never will. Still, what do the following texts reveal to us about them? Matt. 26:56, 69–75; Mark 9:30–32; John 20:19. What lessons can we draw from their experiences?

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Sometimes we can get caught up in the attitude, “Oh, if only God would do this for me, then my faith would be stronger, or if God did that for me . . .” What are the dangers of such an attitude for a disciple of Christ? Instead, what positive things can we do to build up and utilize the faith that we already have been given?
Children are teachable: Always learning and eager to learn. As disciples of Christ, we must be willing to learn, just as children are. It takes humility to have a teachable spirit (vs. 4). We are often quick to share what we know (or what we think we know). Instead, we should be open to being taught by the Holy Spirit. This often comes through the knowledge and experience of other believers. And many of the things we need to learn are about our own character defects. We may understand and accept the truth that is in God’s Word. But it is not always so easy to understand ourselves and to accept the truth about our own faults.

The time that Jesus had with His disciples was spent in teaching them about themselves and the qualities they would need to have in order to minister to others.

Read the following texts. Then discuss, as a class, the qualities that each passage brings out.

• Matt. 8:23–27  
• Mark 8:34–36  
• Luke 5:16  
• Luke 6:41  
• John 4:6–9

Did you discover faith, self-denial, or impartiality? Those who choose to follow Christ will learn these and other qualities that will make them effective disciples.

II. Dependency

Children are dependent. They depend on their parents to feed them, clothe them, shelter them, nurse them when they are sick, protect them, and teach them. In fact, in our society, minor children must have their parents’ permission to do just about anything. In the same way we must be totally dependent on the Savior. He is our Provider, our Healer, our Defender, our Teacher. We should be careful not to embark on any endeavor without His permission—His guidance.

Read the following texts. Describe how the disciples were dependent on Christ in each example: Matt. 14:15–19, 14:24–32, 17:24–27.
The Olivet Discourse

In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus gives what has been called the Olivet discourse (because He gave it on the Mount of Olives). The disciples’ action in pointing out the magnificence of Herod’s temple formed the background of Jesus’ words.

What are some of the major signs of the Advent that Jesus gave the disciples in the Olivet discourse?

Matt. 24:4, 5

vss. 9, 10

vss. 11–13

vss. 23–27

vss. 36–44

There are a number of important things about discipleship that we can take from here. Perhaps one of the most important is that, as disciples, we need to be aware of the spiritual dangers out there. We are in the midst of a great controversy, one between good and evil, one in which we will be subject to many deceptions, some so great that if it were possible even the elect would be deceived (Matt. 24:24). And, considering the context of Jesus’ message, as we near the end of time, we must be even more vigilant regarding these deceptions.

Thus, we must be sure that we, ourselves, are firmly grounded in what we believe and why we believe it, and that as we bring in new members, discipling must include making new members aware of these deceptions.

Of course, the best way always is to know the truth; to be grounded in what is right is the surest way to know what is error. Especially as we near the second coming of Jesus, how crucial that we make an earnest effort to help all members, especially new ones, to be aware of the signs of the times and dangers we can face in these times.

False christs might not necessarily be manifested as someone coming and claiming to be Jesus. What are other ways we can be led astray by anything that usurps the place that Christ alone deserves in our hearts?
Learning Cycle  CONTINUED  

III. Fishers of Men

Read John 21:3–12. This passage could have a twofold message. First, Jesus calls the disciples children, suggesting their dependency and vulnerability. He then provides for them what they could not provide for themselves. All night they caught nothing, but with the Lord’s help they catch more fish in their nets than they could carry. And when they reach the shore, they find a meal prepared for them by the Lord Himself. Here Jesus provides for their immediate physical needs and satisfies their hunger.

The second implication is a spiritual one. When Jesus first called them to be disciples, He told them He would make them fishers of men. Just as they caught an abundance of fish in their nets, they would also, through the power of Christ, bring many lost souls to the Lord.

STEP 3—Practice!

Thought Questions:

1. Why did Jesus allow Peter, James, and John to witness the Transfiguration? (See Matt. 17:1–13.)
2. What significance does the Transfiguration have for us today?
3. What actions in your personal life show your belief in Jesus as the Son of God?

Application Questions:

1. In the Garden of Gethsemane, all of the disciples fled the scene for fear of the multitude. What message can be derived from that experience for disciples of today? (See Matt. 26:56.)
2. How is it possible to have the Lord with us, and to have the knowledge of who He is, and still give in to human weaknesses and sins?
3. Even though the Lord has called us to discipleship, what provisions, if any, has He made for our propensity to yield to sin and temptation? (See Heb. 7:25, Heb. 9:24, 1 John 2:1.)
4. Although it is easy to succumb to human weaknesses, what specific things can we do to overcome these weaknesses?

CONTINUED
Bearing the Cross

In Mark 8:27–30, Jesus asks the disciples about how He is perceived by others. After getting an answer from them, He asks who they think He is. Of them all, Peter is recorded as confessing Jesus as the Christ. Jesus, though, then tells them basically not to tell others. Why would He say that? Wasn’t the whole point of everything He did to get the people to know that He was the Christ?

**Why** do you think Jesus told them what He did? Could there be a lesson here for us, as disciples, about how time and circumstances must be considered before we act? *See also John 4:25–30.*

Notice what follows next in Mark. Jesus’ response to Peter should have basically affirmed for them that He was the Messiah. Imagine what must have gone through their minds when He started telling them what would happen to Him *(Mark 8:31).* Notice, too, it is again Peter who responds, the same Peter who just a few verses earlier professed Jesus as the Messiah *(vs. 32).*

**Read** Jesus’ response to Peter *(Mark 8:33–38).* What crucial message is Jesus giving for all who would be His disciples?

Verse 34 brings in an important element. It says that when Jesus called *the people* along with His disciples, He then began to give them these powerful words about what it means to be a follower, a disciple, of Christ. Though at that time there were certain things only a select few were privileged to know, this message here, about death to self, about bearing a cross, about losing everything for the sake of the gospel, was one everyone who wanted to follow Him needed to hear.

**Ask yourself this question:** When was the last time I bore a cross for Christ? What does your answer tell you about the kind of disciple you truly are? What changes might you need to make, and how can you make them?
Witnessing

At this very moment, Jesus is our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews 9:24 tells us that He now appears in the presence of the Father on our behalf. As we seek to make disciples of others, we can give them this assurance. We serve a merciful God who understands our weaknesses and is able to help us overcome. (See Heb. 4:15, 16.)

STEP 4—Apply!

In Matthew 24 and 25, we see Jesus sitting on the Mount of Olives with the disciples. Here He paints a picture for them that is not as beautiful as the one they see of the grand temple in their beloved city, Jerusalem. They hear Him speak of the fall of Jerusalem and ask, “‘when will these things be?’” (Matt. 24:3, NKJV).

Perhaps in asking what would be the sign of the Lord’s return, the disciples were expecting to hear of some spectacular revelation. Instead, they heard the cold, hard truth of this cruel, hateful world. Instead, they were given a picture of the reality of sin and the pain and sorrow that it would bring upon them—the followers of Christ.

But along with the stories of destruction, of degradation, of desecration, they were given hope. All of these things would happen, but with each passing event, they would be drawn a little closer to the day of their redemption. They knew the Lord would leave them for a while, but the horrific events to come were signs of the soon return of their Messiah. (See Luke 21:28.)

Consider This: Why do you think it was important for the Lord to openly share with the disciples the events that would come?

What impact does the knowledge of last-day events have on your personal commitment to the Lord (especially considering how these things will affect the followers of Christ)?

“Our Lord has said, ‘Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.’ John 6:53-55. This is true of our physical nature. To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring. All this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 660.

Discussion Questions:

1 In class, discuss what it means to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus.

2 Dwell more on the idea that we need to be like children. What other traits do we find in children that make them such good examples? How can we be more childlike in our faith? At the same time, in what ways can we take the child analogy too far?

3 The lesson this week talked about various deceptions that we will have to face as disciples of Christ. What are some of these deceptions that the church is facing in your area of the world? How are they manifested? What kind of guises do they come in? How easily are our members swayed by them? As a church, what can you do to help protect all members from whatever spiritual traps might come their way?

4 What are all the reasons we have been given for faith? In other words, why are we believers? What evidence do we have for our faith? Dwell on your reasons for belief, and then as a class discuss your responses.

5 Summarize what you understand to be the experience of discipleship. What has that experience been for you? What does it encompass? In class, share your experiences.
Following the Master: Discipleship in Action

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:35–37, NKJV).

This week’s lesson calls us to contemplate what is involved in discipleship. We want to look at discipleship in action. God has called us, but each must discern that call and follow its leadings. Thomas Cameron tells of a famous preacher who said he would have loved “to have blown the bellows for Handel, to have picked up the fallen brush for Michelangelo, to have held the spy-glass for Christopher Columbus, or to have carried Shakespeare’s bag. If men count it an honour to do some humble service for the world’s great heroes, what distinction lay in the opportunity of serving the Savior of men?”—A. Gordon Nasb y, ed., Treasury of the Christian World, p. 327.

The Week at a Glance: What should be our motivation for service as disciples? What kind of opposition should we expect? What promises do we have as we embark on the work of discipleship?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 1.
Service and Discipleship

Read Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29–31; and Luke 4:38, 39. What can we learn from this account about discipleship? In other words, regardless of the particular circumstances, what principles are seen here that should apply to all of us?

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Though all three of these accounts record that Peter’s mother-in-law was sick with a fever, Luke alone says she was suffering from a high fever. This detail, some believe, is indicative of Luke’s status as a physician, especially because the phrase itself in the Greek language sounds like one of the technical classes the Greeks used to classify a specific fever.

Notice, too, that in all the accounts it is stressed that the disciples told Jesus about her being sick and that they asked for His help. We should assume, of course, that Jesus already knew all about her problem, yet He still let them tell Him, as well as ask for His divine healing. What lesson could we draw from this about our role as disciples? Is this really discipleship or just plain hospitality?

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After Peter’s mother-in-law was healed, she did not shrink from service. On recovery, she found a houseful of tired and hungry guests who had been concerned for her. Although she could have, she did not claim exhaustion or fatigue from the malady. Rather, she immediately began to wait on them—she began to serve them. The Greek word used is akin to that meaning a “servant,” “minister,” or “deacon.” Inspired by Jesus, she began her service immediately upon recovery.

What has Christ done for you? What has He saved you from? What has been your response? In what ways should the whole Christian life be a response to what Jesus has done for us?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Luke 5:17–26

The Student Will:
Know: Identify how the paralytic’s friends portray faith in action.
Feel: Sense a need to help remove obstacles that keep others from Jesus.
Do: Intercede for those whom sin has paralyzed with doubt or fear.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Faith in Action

A What insights does the story of the paralytic teach about discipleship in action?
B Jesus forgave the paralytic as a result of the faith of His friends. What does this tell us about the power of our intercession on behalf of others?
C After the paralytic was healed, he left glorifying God. How did his body and words serve as a powerful tool for witness and discipleship?

II. Feel: Faith That Moves God’s Heart

A Unable to get past the crowd, the friends resorted to other means. How does this show we must persist, leaving nothing undone on behalf of those we are bringing to Jesus?
B What assurance can we offer those whose past sins paralyze them?

III. Do: Bringing Others to Jesus

A The friends had to break through the roof before they could lower the paralytic. What barriers can we break down so others can reach Jesus?
B The friends lowered their friend into Jesus’ presence. How can we help lift up those to Jesus who cannot lift themselves?

Summary: Jesus calls us to bring into His presence those too paralyzed by past sins to reach out in faith to Him and seek forgiveness on their own.
Jesus and the Paralytic

A well-known story is found in Luke 5:17–26, the story of Jesus healing the paralytic. From it we can learn some important lessons about discipleship in action.

Read verse 17. What powerful and important point can be found there? What message of warning should it have for us, as well?

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Here they were, leaders, teachers of the law, coming from all over, apparently to hear Jesus. The text says that at the time, the “power of the Lord was present to heal them.” In other words, Jesus was there; the power of God was there; help, healing, and salvation were there. The only problem was that self, sin, and pride got in their way. What a powerful warning to us all.

Meanwhile, in this story, we can see discipleship in action. First, there were those who brought the paralytic to Jesus. Notice how hard they worked. Unable to get past the crowd, they had to resort to other means. Think about how desperate they were for their friend. How easily they could have given up! Notice, too, how Jesus acknowledged their faith. Whether they had personally been healed by Jesus, the texts do not say. What we do know is that their works truly revealed their faith. They acted as disciples in the sense of bringing someone needy to Jesus.

After the paralytic was healed, he left glorifying God. No doubt his body and his words were a powerful tool for witness and discipleship (see also vs. 26).

Meanwhile, as all this is going on, the leaders fulminated in darkness over Jesus’ blasphemies. They let their religion, faith, and teaching get in the way of a living experience with Jesus. What a lesson to us all!

In what ways can we, even as professed disciples of Christ, let things get in the way of the Lord working in our lives, or even in the lives of others? What are some of the things that we harbor in our hearts that can blind us to the power of God? Most important, how can we get rid of them?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

After Jesus was arrested in Gathsemane, He was brought before the council of the high priest to be questioned. Peter waited outside in the high priest’s courtyard, hoping to be unnoticed. A couple of people pointed him out, but Peter denied having any association with Jesus. Then someone said to the frightened disciple, “‘Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you’” (Matt. 26:73, NKJV). Here is Peter trying to deny the Lord, but his efforts are foiled by his own speech.

The disciples of Christ are a reflection of Him. They walk as He walked, talk as He talked, and do as He did. He taught, He preached, He healed, He fed, He comforted, He forgave. Jesus was a Man of action. And His followers will be men and women of action, too. (See Matt. 4:23.)

Consider This: As a follower of Jesus, “What must I do?” John 8:31; John 15:4, 5, 8; 1 Cor. 13:4–7; Gal. 5:22, 23.

According to the verses above, those who abide in Christ are His disciples. We abide in Christ through the power of His indwelling Spirit. And abiding in Him brings about certain actions. In the Bible these actions are called fruits. They are actions prompted by love. This love can exist in our hearts only through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. “If You Love Me”

John 14:15 is expressed this way in the NIV, “‘If you love me, you will obey what I command.’” Those who choose to follow Christ do so because they love Him. And if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments. It’s automatic. The things we do will be behaviors that are induced by the love we have in our hearts for the Lord.

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Christianity is regarded most often in peaceful terms. At Jesus’ birth, the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). Even more important, Christianity advocates love, not hate, even for our enemies. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9). How, then, do we understand what Jesus is saying in these verses?

“Jesus here dispels the mistaken opinion that some of the disciples apparently had, that the message they were to bear would result in nothing but harmony. They were not to be surprised, in their house-to-house work . . . , if differences arose as a result of their ministry. . . . When a [person] accepts Christ his closest friends often turn out to be [the] most bitter and relentless enemies. This is often true, not only in heathen lands, but also in Christian lands and among professed Christians who practice a form of religion but know little if anything of its power to transform the life.”—The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, pp. 379, 380.

From your experience as a Christian, and from what you know of Jesus through other texts, what do you believe Jesus is telling us here, and why are these words so important for discipleship? See also Matt. 10:24, 25.

The important point to remember is that following Jesus will cost us big, one way or another. If it does not, then perhaps something is wrong. Maybe we are deceiving ourselves. In the end, we must realize that our witness and life of discipleship, of discipleship in action, can lead to dissension and division among even those to whom we are the closest. It does not always have to be that way, but Jesus wants us to realize that it can, and not to be surprised by it when it does.

What has following Christ cost you, at least in terms of relationships with others? What have you learned in your own experience that could help you disciple someone else who is struggling because his or her faith has, as Jesus said it would, brought division into their life?
In Romans 13:9 the commandments are summed up with the expression, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” When we love others the way that Jesus wants us to love, the love in us will move us into action. We do for others because we love them, in the same way that we obey the Lord because we love Him.

II. Qualities of Love

The attributes of love or the fruits (actions) of the indwelling Spirit are shown in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and Galatians 5:22, 23. These two passages parallel each other. The qualities spoken of in these verses are reflections of the character of Christ.

Expressing the characteristics of Christ requires some action or actions from those who follow Him. You must do something to be long-suffering, to be gentle, or to resist being easily provoked. Expressing kindness involves some kind of action. Even if it is simply a smile or a glance. Jesus often expressed kindness with a simple touch.

Actions of love—godly love—do not always come so easily to the natural man or woman. Our human bodies, minds, and spirits are weakened by sin. That is why Jesus promised to send us a Helper (see John 14:16, NKJV). The Holy Spirit provides the desire and the power to do good.

Consider This: In many cases the Holy Spirit waits for us to call on Him for help in times of need (see Luke 5:18, 19; John 15:7). Can you think of a time in your personal experience when you may have asked for the Holy Spirit’s help?

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STEP 3—Practice!

Thought Questions:

1. There are many “works” or actions that we as disciples are familiar with, such as visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, or helping those in
The Worth of Our Souls

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:35–37, NKJV).

A magazine article told about a special high school where students were doing exceptional work. Their level of academic achievement far exceeded that of most students in the same age bracket anywhere else in the country. These kids, young, ambitious, and bright, seemed destined to go places, to be, by the world’s standards, true success stories. The magazine then quoted one of these young people, who said: “We’re doing all this in order to beat death.”

To beat death? He is going to need more than good grades and a good job to do that.

The fact is that no matter who we are, or what we achieve in this life, sooner or later death comes, sooner or later everything we are ends up in a grave somewhere. And how long do we live, at best? For most of us, not even a hundred years, often not even close. And then it is all gone. What can it mean? What is the purpose of it all, if it all ends in death? What kind of legacy will we leave behind? Thousands of years ago, Solomon mused over these same issues (see Ecclesiastes 1, 2), and concluded that this life, in and of itself, with all its toils and troubles, was all vanity, from a Hebrew word meaning “breath,” “vapor.”

With this in mind, read over the texts for today, thinking about them in the context of this week’s lesson, on discipleship in action. Ask yourself, in light of what Jesus is saying here, “What kind of life should I be living? What does it mean to lose my life for the sake of the gospel? What possibly could be worth my own soul? And what role does my discipling of others play in what Jesus is saying to me?” In other words, what could it cost us here, in this life, to be actively involved in discipleship? What changes do you need to make in order to be truly a disciple of Christ?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

need. How do the attributes of love apply to these ministries? (See 1 Cor. 13:4–7; Gal. 5:22, 23.)

2 Is it possible to do the “actions” of a disciple without being motivated by love?

Application Questions:

1 Love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6, NKJV). How can you apply this to your personal lifestyle?

2 What actions in your everyday life show that you are a disciple?

Witnessing

The impressions that are left by a person when he is gone could have a great influence on the people he leaves behind. We often reflect on the attitudes and actions of people we’ve known or have come in contact with when we are no longer with them. This is why it is so important for us to live life as a witness for Christ in every word and action. Once we are gone, whether in life or death, whatever is done, is done. What kind of impressions should we leave with others?

STEP 4—Apply!

Earlier we spoke of loving your neighbor as yourself (Rom. 13:9). This is a very familiar verse, but how do we apply this to our personal, everyday lives? The first question we should ask ourselves—as someone once asked Jesus—is, who is my neighbor?

Neighbor in this context refers to anyone that we may come in contact with—a relative, a friend, a coworker, a fellow church member, the person who lives next door, a complete stranger whom we pass in the street.

The next question is, how can I love someone else, as I love myself?

Consider This: Some of the definitions for the word as in The American Heritage College Dictionary are: “to the same extent or degree,” or “equally,” or “in the same manner or way that.”—Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997, p. 78.
“Go Therefore and Make Disciples”

One of the greatest sections on the work of discipleship, on disciple-ship in action, is found in Matthew 28:18–20. Read over the verses. Look at all the verbs there: go, make, baptize, teach (NKJV). Disciples should be making more disciples. It is as simple as that.

Read through the verses again, focusing on what Jesus said in the beginning, about all authority (or power) being given to Him in heaven and in earth (see Luke 1:32, Acts 10:36, Eph. 1:20, Heb. 1:13). Why are those words so important for all who are involved in the work of making disciples?

Notice, too, what Jesus says is involved in this work. They are to teach all nations. No exclusivity here, no ethnic, gender, or national boundaries. The death of Christ was for all humanity, everywhere (Rom. 5:17–19, Heb. 2:9); hence, it only makes sense that the gospel commission would be for all humanity, as well (Rev. 14:6, 7).

Notice carefully that Jesus tells them to teach all nations. Where is His emphasis?

Again, as we can see, discipleship is action. Those who become disciples are those who obey, who do the things that Jesus commanded. With these words, Jesus utterly destroys any notion that salvation is purely an intellectual assent to certain doctrinal truths. Though that is certainly part of what it means to be a disciple, it does not end there. Disciples are those who follow Jesus, and we follow Jesus by obeying Him—and we obey Him, not in order to be saved but because we already are saved in Him.

Jesus’ promise is that He will be with us until the end of the world. How have you experienced in your own life the reality of that promise? Dwell on the evidences of Christ’s presence with you. Write and/or recite a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for what Jesus has done and is doing in your life.
Let’s substitute the word *as* in Romans 13:9 with these definitions:

1. You shall love your neighbor to the same extent or to the same degree that you love yourself.
2. You shall love your neighbor equally with yourself. Or, you shall love your neighbor and yourself, equally.
3. You shall love your neighbor in the same manner or in the same way as you love yourself.

The real truth of this verse tells us that we should treat others as *good* as we treat ourselves. And, in most cases, *I* will make sure that my own needs are met. And *I* want the best for myself. Another way to say that is, *I* will *give* myself the best. Or, *I* should give myself the best.

It’s not a bad thing to treat yourself well. In fact, that is what God expects of us. Not to be self-centered or self-absorbed, but in the natural processes of life, we must take care of ourselves. And we should do that in the best possible way. And this is how we should also treat (love) others—in the best possible way.

If we don’t treat ourselves right, we will not treat others right. If we don’t love ourselves, we cannot love others. And if we don’t think well of ourselves, we will have a very hard time thinking good thoughts of others.

- How can you think well of yourself but not think too highly of yourself? How can you love yourself and still put others first?

- What actions do you show toward your enemies or to those who are unkind to you?

Invite a class member to close with prayer.

“The Saviour bade His disciples not to hope that the world’s enmity to the gospel would be overcome, and that after a time its opposition would cease. He said, ‘I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ This creating of strife is not the effect of the gospel, but the result of opposition to it. Of all persecution the hardest to bear is variance in the home, the estrangement of dearest earthly friends. But Jesus declares, ‘He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.’” —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 357.

“Jesus sanctioned the binding claims of the fifth commandment and rebuked any attempt to escape the obligations of children toward their parents. . . . Nevertheless, love for one’s parents must never stand in the way of obedience to God in every particular, should the two be in conflict. Love to God and service for Him are to be the supreme rule of life, ‘the first and great commandment’ . . .; but ‘the second’ table of the Decalogue, which contains the fifth commandment, is ‘like’ the first in nature and importance.” — *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 380.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you know of anyone suffering now directly because of their commitment to Jesus? If so, how can you help? What can you as an individual, as a Sabbath School class, or as a church, do to bring some relief?

2. Dwell more on the texts for Wednesday’s lesson. What important message is Jesus giving us here? Bring your thoughts to class, and as a class talk about what it means to lose your life for the sake of the gospel. What can you learn from each other’s experiences?

3. This week’s lesson was on discipleship in action. What is going on in your own church in the area of discipleship? What can you as a class do to help the church as a whole take a more active role in this important work? For example, what is being done to help disciple new members?
Ever hear of Murphy’s law? It is considered by some to be one of the fundamental laws of nature, as pervasive as gravity and electromagnetism. Stated briefly, it reads, “Whatever can go wrong will go wrong.”

We have all had moments, even days (or longer), that seem to follow Murphy’s law. Sometimes our experiences as disciples seem to follow it, as well. No doubt, we have the promises of God that should help us not to get discouraged, but how easy it is sometimes, even with the promises, to be tempted to give up in despair. Of course, no matter what, we never should.

This week we will look at some disciples and see what we can learn from their bad days.

**The Week at a Glance:** What warning should we take away from the disciples’ bid for political power? What lessons does Judas have for us? What was behind James’s and John’s willingness to destroy those who rejected Jesus? What can we take away from Peter’s rashness and repentance? Why, after having seen so much, did all the disciples forsake Jesus in the hour of His great need?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 8.*
The Power Model

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. After all, if you believe that God is calling you to do something, who is going to let any kind of earthly or worldly considerations stand in your way? That is why, for instance, some governments seek to quell religion among the people, because they do not want people having allegiance to a higher authority, and you cannot get any higher than the Divine. On the other hand, governments are not immune from seeking to co-opt the incredible power of religion and using it to their own advantage. The disciple of Christ has to be aware of the various dangers involved with abusing the power of religion.

Read John 6:1–15. What lesson can we learn from this about how the disciple of Christ should view political power?

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Though, of course, Jesus’ purpose on earth was not to become an earthly king, it is clear that garnering earthly political power should not be equated with doing the work of discipleship. That God can put people in power, or that He can use people in power, is one thing; it is another to somehow view the amassing of political power in the name of God as the work of God, the work of discipleship. Nothing in the New Testament presents this power model of the gospel. Unfortunately, even His closest disciples missed this important point: “The disciples unite with the multitude in declaring the throne of David the rightful inheritance of their Master. It is the modesty of Christ, they say, that causes Him to refuse such honor. . . . They eagerly arrange to carry out their purpose.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 378. Building on the eager expectation and enthusiasm of the multitude, they forcefully attempted to take Jesus and make Him King over the nation (John 6:14, 15). This was discipleship their way. In reaction to this move, Jesus dismissed the multitude, sent the disciples to cross the lake, and went into the mountains alone to pray.

What are ways, even on a more personal level, that we can abuse religion and co-opt it for our own selfish ends?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** Luke 9:51–56

**The Student Will:**
- **Know:** Understand that religious power is not to be misused.
- **Feel:** Cultivate mercy toward wrongdoers without condoning their beliefs.
- **Do:** Determine to purge judgmental attitudes.

**Learning Outline:**

I. Know: The Sons of Thunder

- **A** James and John generously offered to call fire down from heaven Elijah style on the Samaritans. No wonder Jesus called them the “sons of thunder.” What else might this nickname indicate about their temperaments? What does this suggest about Jesus’ willingness to work with us, despite our flaws?
- **B** What does the disciples’ offer say about their harsh and judgmental attitude toward sinners?

II. Feel: Mercy for Wrongdoers

- **A** Discuss how misdirected zeal, even in a good cause, can produce more harm than good.
- **B** How can we show mercy and grace to people without condoning their beliefs?
- **C** Discipleship is not just a call to something new but a call *from* something old. The Bible says Jesus calls us *out* of darkness *into* His marvelous light. With this in mind, how does Jesus transform us from “sons of thunder” into “sons of God”?

III. Do: Blessed Are the Merciful

- **A** The disciples misused the story of Elijah to justify their vengeance. How are we guilty of willfully ignoring or distorting God’s Word?
- **B** How should we treat those who offend us? What does Jesus’ response to James and John teach us?

**Summary:** Our first work as disciples is to bring people to the mercy of Jesus and leave the judging of hearts to Him.
The Greed Model

Someone once said, “If you want to get rich, start a religion.” How unfortunate, but there is a lot of truth to that cynical statement. After all, when dealing with religious faith, we are dealing with some of the most important aspects of human existence. We are dealing with the meaning of life, with the hope of eternity, with the belief that we are forgiven by God for our sins. However much Jesus Himself, by model and example, lived a life of self-denial and poverty, however much He warned us against getting caught up in the things of this world, church history is replete with examples of those who have used the power of religion and religious ideas to gain wealth for themselves, often at the expense of the poor.

Read John 12:1–6 and then answer the following questions:

1. What symbolism is found in the act of Mary? In other words, in what ways does it represent the attitudes of the true disciples of Christ? See also Matt. 13:46, Phil. 3:8.

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2. What does this story tell us about the importance of the motives of our actions?

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3. The texts say that Lazarus, the resurrected Lazarus, was at the table with them. Why does that fact make Judas’s actions even more repugnant, more indicative of how blinded he was by his own sin?

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It is with good reason that Paul made the famous statement he did in 1 Timothy 6:10. Judas eventually lost his soul over his love of money. From the start, it seems, he was looking out only for number one; he himself, and the desire to gain things for himself, was woven all through his own discipleship. Of course, the other disciples were not totally selfless either, but with Judas it got the best of him.

How can you be sure that greedy motives are not poisoning your role as a disciple of Christ? More so, if you detect some impure motives, how can you be purged of them?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

No one lives a pressure-free life. Everyone is faced with decisions and responsibilities that weigh him or her down. Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?

- Your job is hard, and you wonder if you have the strength to keep it up.
- Your income is limited, and you worry about how secure your employment future is.
- You’re troubled about your children and the choices they make.
- Your health isn’t as good as you wish it would be.
- It seems as if there’s more cooking and cleaning and bills to pay than you have resources for.
- You’re faced with a decision that has enormous life consequences.

The question isn’t whether you experience pressure or not. The question is what kind of disciple you are when you’re feeling the weight of life on your shoulders.

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. The Power Model

Read John 6:1–15. This is one more example of Christianity’s ongoing temptation with power. Jesus avoided amassing political power (see also Matthew 4:8–11); the early Christian church didn’t. It quickly formed a wealthy and powerful hierarchy that still exists today in parts of Christendom. The poet James Russell Lowell warned, “Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne.” Wherever Christianity has allied itself with political power, whether in the early church, in the church of the Middle Ages, or in some types of Christian Americanism today, it runs the risk of trespassing on religious freedom.

II. The Greed Model

Read John 12:5, 6. Judas’s comment might be considered a wise and prac-
The Thunder Model

There were at least two pairs of brothers among Jesus’ twelve disciples. At their call, Jesus surnamed the pair of James and John boanerges, or “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Some commentators believe that Jesus gave them this name because of their vehement temperaments and fiery tempers. Therefore, we have chosen to call their approach to discipleship the thunder model.

Read Luke 9:51–56. Look at the reaction of the disciples to the rejection of Jesus. As you read this, try to put yourself in the place of these disciples. What reasons would they have for reacting as they did? In other words, what things did they hear Jesus say, or what other Old Testament examples might they have drawn from, that could have caused them to react as they did? See, for example, Genesis 6, 7, Matt. 8:12, 13:42, Mark 6:11.

A number of problems exist with the reaction of the disciples. There is zeal for the Lord, which is good, which all disciples should have. But misdirected zeal, even in a good cause, can produce more harm than good. For instance, James and John used the story of Elijah as their model. The only problem is that they misused it. Elijah brought fire down from heaven to consume sacrifices (1 Kings 18), not recalcitrant people (he had them slain another way).

Even worse, of course, was their harsh and judgmental attitude toward sinners. The work of every disciple of Christ should be that of seeking ways to bring sinners to the foot of the Cross, to show them the incredible mercy and grace of God, who in Himself bore the punishment of their sins. Thus, no matter how sinful their lives have been, through Jesus they can have full pardon, full forgiveness, and a new life in Him. That is our work as disciples; we can leave the judging to the Lord.

How judgmental are you toward those whom you deem wayward and wrong? How do we show these people the grace and mercy of God, while at the same time not giving the impression that we condone or approve of their lives and/or beliefs?
tical consideration in many church situations. Do we not appreciate the treasurer who helps us to spend our money wisely? Without John’s editorial comment about Judas’s motives, we may think Judas’s suggestion a good one. What may have bothered Judas the most was that he didn’t get to decide where the money went; Mary “invested” it in Jesus without asking Judas’s practical advice.

**Consider This:** In a church, how do we decide whether money is wasted or well spent?

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### III. The Thunder Model

Read Luke 9:54. If there is any justification for the disciples’ vengeful suggestion, it can be found in the belief that Jesus was the returned Elijah *(Mark 8:27, 28)*, a prophet who during his ministry called down fire from heaven upon his opponents *(2 Kings 1:10–12)*. This is a good example of why we must make a distinction between God’s methods in the Old Testament and the New.

### IV. The Repentant-Peter Model

Perhaps you’ve met someone like Peter, who is completely on fire for the Lord one moment and uninterested the next. These people are moved quickly and even violently by emotional situations, but their interest and support lack staying power when under pressure.

**Consider This:** Emotion is often invoked in our methods of evangelism and religious instruction. Is there a danger of creating believers who respond to emotion but lack reliability? How do we raise our children to be consistent and steady Christians?

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**The Message:** The Crucifixion talks to us, not just about God but about humanity, as well. And the message is not pleasant. Of course, if we haven’t gotten that message by now, we never will. The fact is that

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CONTINUED
The Repentant-Peter Model

Peter is known as that impetuous disciple who always had something to say on everything. Luke 22:33, 34 says he was so sure of himself and his discipleship that he promised to go with Jesus even to prison and death. Of course, not long after, he had to retract those words (Matt. 26:69–75).

Read John 18:1–11. What does this tell us about the personality and character of Peter, especially in light of Matthew 26:69–75?

We all know about Peter’s failure. It exists as a powerful lesson to all disciples of Christ. We cannot work for the Lord in our own power. How crucial it is that we day by day surrender ourselves to Jesus. He is the Vine, we are the branches; without Him we can do nothing, especially not be faithful disciples. Again, zeal for the Lord and His cause is wonderful, but it must be done under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Read John 21:15–19. What does this teach us about what Jesus can do for those of His disciples who, repenting of their mistakes, do not give up on Christ?

“Here is given a lesson for all Christ’s followers. The gospel makes no compromise with evil. It cannot excuse sin. Secret sins are to be confessed in secret to God; but, for open sin, open confession is required. . . . By giving proof of repentance, the disciple, so far as lies in His power, is to remove this reproach. . . . Three times Peter had openly denied his Lord, and three times Jesus drew from him the assurance of his love and loyalty, pressing home that pointed question, like a barbed arrow to his wounded heart. Before the assembled disciples Jesus revealed the depth of Peter’s repentance, and showed how thoroughly humbled was the once boasting disciple.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 811, 812.

Notice what Jesus said to Peter in John 21:18, 19. Jesus, basically, was telling Peter that in the end, Peter would end up dying for the Lord he so fervently loved. Peter’s words, in the end, came true, but only after he had learned some hard lessons about discipleship.

Have you made boastful promises, only to fail time and again, from fulfilling them? What can you take away from the story of Peter that can help you not to give up?
Jesus has been crucified and rejected, not just by the rabble but by the highest forms of religion and power together. The “best” of the nation had worked against Him. The lesson should be clear. Status, education, power, prestige, even knowledge is no guarantee of piety, holiness, or right action. What makes the key difference are hearts humbled, surrendered, and open to the leading of the Lord.

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Class Activities and Discussion:**

1. **Pressure Points**
   Ask your class to share what sorts of things place them under the most pressure. (Note: This kind of discussion can be helpful and healing, but the teacher must moderate carefully to be sure people don’t tell embarrassing confidences, or that you get off the track of the lesson in listening to someone’s troubles. Set a limit to the discussion and follow it with a prayer for mentioned needs.)

2. **Comforting Texts for High-Pressure Times**
   Many people have favorite Scripture texts that reassure them during difficult passages of life. Ask your class to share favorite passages that comfort them in the following situations. (Note: It may be well for the teacher to make a list of his or her own before class to stimulate discussion.)

   - When facing a health problem
   - When experiencing marriage problems
   - When concerned about children
   - When under pressure at work or seeking employment
   - When depressed or discouraged
   - When uncertain about the future
   - When making a major decision
The Flight Model

“Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled” (Matt. 26:56).

The disciples spent three and a half years with Jesus. They had privileges that very few in the world ever had. They saw things few humans ever did. After all, among the world’s billions, how many ever saw Jesus in the flesh? More so, how many ever interacted day after day with Him while He was here in the flesh? These disciples were among the most privileged humans ever to have lived.

Of course, that was part of the problem—they were humans, fallen humans, and thus, no matter what the Lord did for them, the lessons were not easily learned.

Skim through a Gospel, any Gospel. What were the amazing things that Jesus said and did in the sight of His disciples? How much incredible proof did He give them concerning who He was? After going over those incidents, look at the text for today. What fearful message, even warning, can we draw from this for ourselves?

Knowing He would be leaving them, Jesus prepared the disciples for His departure, but they did not listen. Knowing what would happen in Jerusalem, He prepared them for His passion, but they did not listen. They arrived in Jerusalem totally unprepared.

During Jesus’ ministry, the disciples seemed to look at what He did rather than to listen to what He said. His deeds confirmed their Messianic hopes, and that pleased them very much. At the Transfiguration the heavenly Voice called them to listen to Jesus, yet they did not benefit from His instructions about the Passion.

Following the Passover meal, Jesus tried to show His followers what lay ahead, but they would not listen. In the Garden, He tried to get them to pray to gain strength, but they slept.

Meditate on all that Jesus has done for you: the promises, the hope, the gifts given you, the changes made in your life, the evidences for your faith, all through Christ. How can we, by clinging to these things, avoid the mistakes of the disciples?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

- When you’ve lost a loved one in death
- When God feels distant

3. A Follower of Jesus
Where in the gospel story do we see Jesus under pressure? (Examples: being challenged by Pharisees and religious leaders, with the money-changers at the temple, in Gethsemane, when feeding the people, with the demoniac among the tombs). Discuss and evaluate His responses, with emphasis on how we who follow Him can emulate His example.

STEP 4—Apply!

Peter Marshall, former chaplain of the United States Senate and a beloved preacher, was known for his thoughtful prayers. He once prayed this: “When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure.”

Note that in most of this week’s lessons, pressure caused an initial failure of discipleship, but those who failed (with the exception of Judas) came back with new understanding and strength. This is the vital lesson that you must send your class home with: Though pressure can initially cause us to falter in our walk with Jesus, it can also be a breakthrough to a more faithful, more consistent, kind of discipleship.

Consider This: Have you had experiences in your life that have seemed unnecessarily hard but that strengthened you in the end? What lessons did you learn from those experiences that could be a blessing to others who might be struggling right now and yet have no idea why or how they are going to get through it?

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“The love of money in the heart of Judas was growing with the exercise of his shrewd abilities. His practical financiering ability, if exercised and enlightened and moulded by the Holy Spirit, would have been of great service to the little church, and by the sanctification of his spirit he would have had a clear insight, a correct discernment to appreciate heavenly things. But worldly policy plans were constantly cherished by Judas. There was no outbreaking sin on his part, but his sharp scheming, the selfish, parsimonious spirit that took possession of him, finally led him to sell his Lord for a small sum of money.”—Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1101.

“Judas was with Christ through the entire period of the Saviour’s public ministry. He had all that Christ could give him. . . . Had he sought to be a blessing, instead of a questioning, criticizing, selfish man, the Lord would have used him to advance His kingdom. But Judas was a speculator. He thought that he could manage the finances of the church, and by his sharpness in business get gain. He was divided in heart. He loved the praise of the world. He refused to give up the world for Christ. He never committed his eternal interests to Christ. . . . Judas was a religious fraud.”—Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1101, 1102.

Discussion Questions:

1. If disciples are followers, are those who follow their own ideas and programs still disciples? Dwell on that question and your answer.

2. What other models of discipleship under pressure can you think of, and what lessons can we learn from them?

3. While we can find in Peter someone who jumped ahead too fast, only to stumble and fall, what are the dangers of being too cautious? In what ways can we go too far the other way? Think about this and bring some thoughts to class. As you do, think about your local church as a whole. Is your church too ready to jump ahead of the Lord, or does it tend to be too timid to follow the leading of the Lord? What can you do, as a class, to help your church strike the right balance?
**SABBATH AFTERNOON**

**Read for This Week’s Study:** Matt. 14:22–33; Mark 4:36–41; 6:51, 52; Luke 8:25; 24:37; John 6:19.

**Memory Text:** “But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid’ ” (Matthew 14:27).

Jesus selected His disciples so that they could be with Him and could learn from Him. Apparently, they were not as sharp and quick-witted as one would expect. How much different are we? Some of us have been walking with God for several years, and we still do not understand fully what the demands of discipleship are. As in the natural world, so it is in the spiritual. Growth is essential for life. Every day should bring some growth in depth, width, or height. What preparation of soil and nutrients are you making to assure growth and success in discipleship?

This week’s lesson will look at more examples from the Word of God that can help us understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

**The Week at a Glance:** Why were the disciples of Christ often full of fear? What can we learn from Jesus’ warnings about the leaven of the Pharisees? How do we respond to those who purposely close their hearts to our witness?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 15.*
Lessons at Sea

By the time of the events in Mark 4, the disciples had already been with Jesus for a while. How much they must have learned at the foot of the Master.

Read Mark 4:36–41. What is so revealing about their words to Him in verse 38? How often do we find ourselves having a similar response in frightful times?

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It is so easy for us to do the same thing, to wonder, when tragedy and problems strike, if God cares at all. The irony, of course, is that Jesus was right there the whole time. He was the One who first told them to take the boat across to begin with. This storm did not take Him by surprise, and neither do our trials.

What significance (if any) can be found in the fact that the disciples, not the storm, woke Jesus?

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Notice the element of fear in the disciples all through the account. They feared the storm; and then, after the storm was calmed, they seemed to fear Jesus. The manifestation of such power was impressive, of course, but one would have thought by now that, after their time with Christ, they would have known that they had nothing to fear from Him. On the contrary, this power should have been a source of great hope and comfort to them, because by now they should have known the character of the One who possessed all that power. This account shows that these men still had a lot to learn about what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

When was the last time you wondered if the Lord cared about you and your situation, whatever it was? What lessons did you learn from that trial that you could use next time you face a trial or tragedy?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Texts: Matthew 14:27, Mark 6:45–52

The Student Will:
Know: Discuss how God through Christ has conquered anything truly worth fearing.
Feel: Nurture a desire to make our faith central in our lives.
Do: Trust God to deliver us in times of trial.

Learning Outline:
I. Know: Faith at Sea
   A What lesson had the disciples failed to learn before the storm?
   B What did it mean that their hearts were hardened with unbelief?
   C We often think we’d have stronger faith if we could witness the spectacular miracles Jesus performed during His earthly ministry. Yet, the same Peter who walked on water toward Jesus later denied he even knew Him. What does that say?

II. Feel: Safety in the Midst of the Storm
   A What prompts Jesus to come to His disciples’ aid? What does that reveal about His watch care?
   B What assurance does Jesus’ power over the sea give us that He is able to save us out of any predicament?

III. Do: Trust in God
   A Imagine how Jesus must have looked to His disciples—His pale robe glowing eerily in the dark—never mind that He was walking on water. No wonder they thought He was a ghost. How can we avoid mistaking God’s help for something that could hurt us, as the disciples first did?
   B Jesus did not warn His disciples about the storm. Instead, He sent them across the water. How have trials strengthened your faith?

Summary: We are totally dependent on God to keep us safe.
Lessons at Sea (Continued)

If you think about it, the sea is a good place to learn lessons about discipleship. After all, though as humans we are totally dependent upon God for everything (see Job 12:10, Dan. 5:23, Acts 17:28), it is not so easy to forget it when you are out on the water, where what is beneath your feet will not hold you up but will swallow you instead. Perhaps that is why the Lord chose to use the sea to teach His disciples a few more lessons about faith, the key element for any successful discipleship.

Following a successful missionary tour (Mark 6:6–13), the feeding of the five thousand, and their first encounter on the lake, the disciples finally should have been catching on. The evening after the feeding of the five thousand, another storm overtook them on the lake, this time without Jesus in the boat with them.

Read Matthew 14:22, 33 and Mark 6:45–52. What are the numerous mistakes the disciples made in these two accounts?

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Though one account omits the story of Peter walking on the water, one point both make is that those who witnessed what happened were duly impressed. Some openly called Jesus the Son of God; in Mark’s account, they were amazed beyond measure about what they had experienced. It was one thing to be able to get the weather to obey Him, but to have the power to walk on water, especially during a storm? Truly they had been witnesses to the power of God in ways that few people have ever seen.

Read Mark 6:51, 52. What point do you think Mark was making about faith and belief? What lessons might there be for us in that point?

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Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

You may have heard the saying (attributed to various authors), “The only thing we learn from history is that we never learn from history.” What is true of world history is also true of personal history. As our author points out in this lesson’s introduction, even those who walked with Jesus and observed Him face to face often learned their lessons in discipleship the hard way—by making mistakes.

Though Jesus gave them marvelous instruction in His sermons and teachings, when faced with difficult situations they still lost heart and made wrong choices. Rather than avoiding failures, they had to be corrected in the midst of them.

Encourage your class with the thought that throughout Scripture, those who were closest to God experienced some remarkable failures in discipleship. From those failures came lessons that led to more faithful discipleship. That’s encouraging, because all of us are painfully aware of our failures! In fact, the argument can be made that human beings learn better and faster from failure than we do from instruction. A good teacher says, “It is better to try and make mistakes than not try at all.” In following Jesus we will sometimes fail. That’s why we are offered forgiveness!

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. Lessons at Sea (Read Mark 4:35–41.)

The most interesting phrase is verse 38: “‘Don’t you care if we drown?’” (NIV). What appears to annoy them is Jesus’ calmness. Only if He also were falling apart would they believe He cared for them! It is not an infrequent dynamic between human beings. “On the human level, we often act like the disciples. We expect others to share our panic or distress. If they seem detached from the situation, we accuse them of not caring about our suffering. Panic reactions can divide us from others who might help us as they can cause us to doubt God’s love for us.”—The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. VIII, p. 581. It is often those who remain calm who are equipped to
The Leaven of the Pharisees

**Read** Matthew 16:1–12 and then answer the following questions:

1. What evidence do we have that the leaders who came to Jesus were not sincere in their question? After all, what is wrong with having a sign from heaven? Is the Bible not full of signs from heaven? What point should we as disciples take from what is happening here? *See earlier chapters in Matthew; see also Luke 16:29–31.*

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2. Look carefully at Jesus’ words to the Sadducees and the Pharisees. What is the principle behind the specific warning to them (*Matt. 23:23)*?

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3. Read Jesus’ words to the disciples in Matthew 16:8–11. What point is Jesus making to them? Why do we find it so easy to do the same thing; that is, to forget the great things God has done before our eyes?

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What a contrast between the Bread of Life and the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and yet how easy it is to get them confused. All disciples of Christ need to be aware that belief, or following traditions, or *defending* the faith are not always the same as being a disciple of Christ. How easy, once we get established, even comfortable, in what we believe, or in how we worship, or in how we practice our faith, to let these things become ends in and of themselves, instead of a means to an end. That end, of course, is to be a faithful disciple of Christ, doing His will and revealing His love and His character to the world.
Learning Cycle continued

provide the most help—as Jesus demonstrates.

II. Lessons at Sea (continued) (Read Mark 6:45–56.)

We sometimes suppose that if we could see frequent miracles, we would fear for nothing. The experience of the disciples proves otherwise. “If miracles alone create faith, the disciples have witnessed more than enough for their faith to be strong.”—The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. VIII, p. 604. In the face of a fearfu event, their faith in Jesus’ power, built up through seeing and experiencing numerous miracles, evaporated. In light of this text, help your class to examine their own faith in crises.

Consider This: Have you ever asked questions like the disciples’: “Lord, why don’t You care about me?” “Where are You when I need You?” How have such faith crises been resolved in your experience?

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III. The Leaven of the Pharisees (Read Matthew 16:1–12.)

To understand this text fully, it is important to note the confusion about Jesus’ use of leaven (yeast) as a metaphor. In Jewish faith, yeast, because of the way a small bit of “starter” would permeate a whole batch of dough, symbolized sin’s corruption. Although yeast was used in Jewish baking, it could not be offered as a sacrifice to God (Exod. 23:18, Lev. 6:17) and was removed from the home during Passover (Exod. 12:34–39).

One might almost suppose the disciples preferred to mishear Jesus. There was a tendency in Judaism (as among Christians) to prefer simple, physical compliance over a deep change of attitude; that is, it is much easier to give up yeast in your food than to examine your feelings toward commonly accepted religious thought.

Consider This: Do you think we Adventists run the risk of making this same mistake? Might we substitute simple compliance (keeping the
Lessons From Fear

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18).

Perhaps you have noticed something through the course of this study, and that is how often the disciples were afraid. All through the Gospels, we find time and again the disciples in various situations, and time and again the Bible records them as being afraid.

**What was it in these various situations that caused them to fear?**

**What can we learn from their experiences?**

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**Read** Mark 9:30–32. What made them fearful here? What important point can we take away from this example?

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What is so sad about this case is that they were fearing the one thing that offered them the greatest hope they could possibly have: salvation through the atoning death of Jesus on their behalf. They feared what they did not understand; they feared what they did not want to hear. Had they understood what the Cross was all about, they would not have feared. Hence, it was their ignorance that kept them fearful.

As disciples, as followers of Christ, we should, of all people, have the least to fear. The same Jesus who could walk on water during a storm, who could bring healing to a paralytic, who could feed five thousand with just a few loaves of bread, is the same Jesus who revealed His love to us by dying on the cross as our Substitute. Sure, sin is real, the devil is real, hell will be real, and we need to be aware of the dangers to our souls (*Matt. 10:28*), but in the end, as disciples, as long as we cling to the reality of God’s love as revealed in Christ, we should learn to live within the hope and comfort of God’s amazing love for, and grace toward, us.
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Sabbath, eating correctly) for a deeper, more substantial change of heart?

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IV. Lessons From Fear

**Consider This:** What are the greatest fears of our times? How do our fears compare with the actual dangers? (For example, people are far more likely to be killed in a car accident than by terrorists; but people rarely fear a car ride but do fear terrorism.) How can our faith put our fears in perspective?

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V. Discipleship and Witness

As an answer to the Thomas Nagel quote in the lesson, you might share this line from English essayist Joseph Addison, “To be an atheist requires an infinitely greater measure of faith than to receive all the great truths which atheism would deny.”

STEP 3—Practice!

Class Activities and Discussion:

1. Lessons From Failure
   Since much of this week’s lesson involves lessons learned from failure,
Discipleship and Witness

“I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”—Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 130.

Look at the above quote. As disciples, what is to be our attitude toward someone like that? Which Bible texts come to mind as you think about this person? Write out the texts.

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Now that you have written down the texts, take the time to go over them. Does a particular theme come through? Are your texts those of compassion, judgment, sorrow, or retribution? Or something else? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

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An inseparable part of what it means to be a disciple is, of course, witnessing. All through the Gospels, we see Jesus preparing His disciples to lead others to salvation. Some folk believed quite readily; others seemed determined to reject Jesus no matter what.

No question, as disciples of Christ, as we witness, we will come across all types, including those who, perhaps not as honestly as the man quoted above, will nevertheless reflect the same kind of attitude.

How do we respond to these people? Anger? Love? A feeling of personal failure? All or none of the above?

What can we learn from the life and teachings of Jesus that will help us, as disciples of Jesus, to deal with those who are determined to close their hearts and minds? At what point, if ever, does our responsibility toward them end?
share with your class a situation in your life where you learned a lesson from failure that you hadn’t been able to learn in other ways. Invite class members to share their own examples. Discuss with your class the value of making mistakes as an effective method of learning, as well as the dangers of learning things “the hard way.”

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2. Praying for God’s Presence
The disciples were constantly with Jesus—yet, during difficult times they felt fearful and alone. How much more so for the members of your class! Use this activity for the encouragement of your class members.

• Ask each class member to partner with someone next to him or her.
• Share with the partner one situation in your life where you are in need of the assurance of God’s comforting presence right now. Keep it brief!
• The partner must listen carefully to be sure he or she understands the need.
• Your partner will pray a short (one or two sentence) prayer for you.
• Do the same, reversing roles.

▶STEP 4—Apply!

In Pilgrim’s Progress, a character named Little-Faith from the town of Sincere is set upon and robbed by three brothers: Faint-Heart, Mistrust, and Guilt. They turn tail when they “suppose that one Great-Grace was in the way.” Great-Grace is the king’s champion, says the narrator. But he adds, “All the King’s subjects are not his champions; nor can they, when tried, do such feats of war as he.”

Like the disciples, we may not always have strong faith. We are not necessarily spiritual champions. But our weak faith is met by God’s great grace, and it is that which brings us safely to the Celestial City.

“Although Peter had been long with the Master, he had a very imperfect conception of the plan of salvation. He did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ; but it was through the cross that life and hope were to come to dying men.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 7, 1891.

“God’s children are not to be subject to feelings and emotions. When they fluctuate between hope and fear, the heart of Christ is hurt; for He has given them unmistakable evidence of His love. He wants them to be established, strengthened, and settled in the most holy faith. He wants them to do the work He has given them; then their hearts will become in His hands as sacred harps, every chord of which will send forth praise and thanksgiving to the One sent by God to take away the sins of the world.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 518, 519.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the things that you fear? How can you learn to overcome those fears? On the other hand, are there things that we should rightly fear? Be prepared to discuss your answers in class on Sabbath.

2. What are ways we can become modern-day Sadducees and Pharisees? Why is that easier than we think? How are these attitudes manifested in the church today? Also, what are the steps that one takes in going from being a disciple to being a Pharisee? Are they easier than going from being a Pharisee to a disciple? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class.

3. What would you classify as the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees in the church today?

4. As a class, talk about the attitude of the man expressed in Thursday’s lesson. In what ways are the principles of the attitude manifested in us, even as Christians? Are there things about our faith or doctrines that we shut our minds to because we simply do not want to believe them? Could it be that we have a hard time learning the lessons the Lord wants to teach us because we do not want to learn them?
Lesson 12

March 15–21

Mission and Commission

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day” (Luke 24:46).

As Adventists, we understand much of our role in the Great Commission to be linked to the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. At the center of these messages is the everlasting gospel. We have nothing to give to the world unless we give them, above anything and everything else, the great truth of justification by faith alone.

“Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel’s message in verity.’”—Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, April 1, 1890. Thus, for Ellen G. White, central to our mission is the proclamation of justification by faith alone, the great news that salvation comes only through the grace of God poured out upon undeserving sinners and not through any works on our part.

This week we will look at the gospel in the context of the Great Commission.

The Week at a Glance: What role do works of charity have in the life of those who are disciples? What role did Jesus give to the Scriptures in explaining His life and death? How central is the gospel in the Great Commission that Jesus gave to His church?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 22.
End-Time Drama and Discipleship

Read Matthew 25:31–46. This passage is part of Jesus’ Olivet discourse given during His final week of Judean ministry. It is part of the last words of His final pre-Passion discussion.

How are we to understand these words in Matthew 25:31–46, especially in the area of discipleship and witness?

This passage conveys a truth about the mission of disciples. Jesus clearly indicates that part of the work of disciples involves mission to the poor, the sick and suffering, the imprisoned; thus, to all the needy. The ultimate manifestation of discipleship is revealed in how we treat those around us who are in need.

“Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering. In that day Christ does not present before men the great work He has done for them in giving His life for their redemption. He presents the faithful work they have done for Him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 637.

The Bible does make it clear, in numerous places, that salvation is not earned by our works but comes solely by God’s grace. How, then, are we to understand what Jesus is saying? As you seek to answer this question, keep in mind the idea of who a true disciple is: someone who has surrendered himself/herself totally and completely to Jesus, claiming for themselves “the great work He [Jesus] has done for them in giving His life for their redemption.” How does keeping this important truth before us help us better understand what Jesus is saying? After all, who of us could feed enough poor people, or clothe enough naked people, to earn redemption?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Mark 16:14–20

The Student Will:
Know: Explain why justification by faith is the core of the Great Commission.
Feel: Nourish a desire to be rooted firmly in the gospel.
Do: Live the gospel we are called to preach.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: The Great Commission and the Gospel
   A List Jesus’ instructions and promises to the disciples in the Great Commission.
   B What does the Great Commission call us to do? How does the call to preach the gospel lie at the foundation of the gospel commission?
   C Jesus appeared to the disciples and “upbraided” them for their disbelief in His resurrection. The word comes across tougher in the Greek, meaning “reproached,” “denounced,” or even “insulted.” Why did He need to deal first with their hardheartedness before commissioning them?
   D What definition does Jesus give of gospel in the Great Commission?

II. Feel: Rooted in the Gospel
   A What part does one’s own Christian experience play in one’s ability to spread the gospel?
   B Can you spread the gospel without having fully experienced it yourself?

III. Do: Living the Gospel
   A Reread the Key Text. Now ask: “What role can we play in the fulfillment of these words?”
   B The disciples had trouble believing in Jesus’ resurrection. Do we also deny He is alive by the way we live? What obstacles must we ask God to remove from our hearts?

Summary: We should make every effort to make the Great Commission our own through prayer, action, and study.
The Commissioning in Mark

In an earlier lesson, we looked at the Great Commission as presented in Matthew 28:18–20. Read those texts again; review the highlights, particularly the commands and the promises. Ask yourself, when done: “What role am I playing in the fulfillment of these words?”

**Read** Mark 16:14–20 and compare it with Matthew 28:18–20. What elements are found in one and not the other?

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After you have noted the differences, read both accounts again. There is an unmistakable harmony between them. The basic message is the same.

**What** is Jesus’ message to us, as found in both these accounts?

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In both accounts we are told that there was some doubt (*Matt. 28:17*), some hardness of heart, on the part of the disciples. In Mark’s account, Jesus *upbraided* them for this doubt, even though the Greek verb there can be translated into stronger language, such as “reproached,” “denounced,” or even “insulted.” The point was that even after all this time, even after all these things, some among them still struggled with faith. Jesus had to deal firmly with them.

Notice, too, that only after Jesus dealt with their hardness of heart did He give them their commission. Jesus knew that for them to succeed they needed to be strong in faith. His physical presence would soon be gone from them, for He was to be “received up into heaven” (*Mark 16:19*). Anything they were to do for Him from then on would have to be done by faith alone.

Though faith is a gift, it is a gift that needs to be cultivated. What things can you do on a daily basis to nurture, protect, and strengthen your faith?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

One of the ways in which Christianity differs from some of the other world religions is the explicit demand to make converts. Christians do not say, “Your religion is fine—just different than mine.” We want all people not just to know about Jesus but to accept Him as Lord and Savior.

Every member of your class knows someone with whom they ought to be carrying out the gospel commission—someone to whom they ought to be bringing the good news. Suggest to your class that they picture in their minds people in these categories:

- A neighbor on your street or in your building
- Your own child or spouse
- A relative
- A coworker
- Someone with whom you trade or do business
- A friend

Consider This: If any of these people haven’t heard the good news clearly from you, it is possible that they are your assignment in fulfilling the gospel commission. Fortunately, you are not left to do it alone.

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. End-Time Drama and Discipleship  (Read Matthew 25:31–46.)

Two questions about this passage are answered by analysis in the original Greek language. First, who are the “nations” (ethne) gathered before Him? The word can mean either kingdoms themselves or the citizens of all nations, but the tense of the pronoun “them” (vs. 32) indicates a judgment

CONTINUED
Discipleship and the Gospel

Let us look at something else in Mark’s account of the Great Commission. In Mark 16:15, 16, Jesus says, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Thus, we see that at the foundation of the commission is the call to preach the gospel.

With that in mind, read Revelation 14:6. How do these verses help us understand what our work is, not just as disciples but as Seventh-day Adventist disciples?

With the work of preaching the gospel so central to discipleship and with the making of disciples, how crucial that we understand what the gospel message really is. Jesus, however, right there in those verses in Mark, pretty much gives us the gospel. Believe it, and you shall be saved; reject it, and you shall be lost.

Compare what Jesus said in Mark with John 3:14–19. How does what John writes help us to understand what Jesus is saying in Mark?

How crucial that as disciples we be rooted firmly in the gospel that we are called to preach. Because of sin, the world stood condemned; Jesus bore that condemnation, fully and completely, in Himself. Through this wonderful provision, anyone who believes in Him no longer has to face the condemnation that came through sin; instead, thanks to God’s unfathomable grace, that person—regardless of how sinful his or her past has been—is pardoned, forgiven, and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. This message must be at the foundation of all that we preach and teach to the world.
of individuals as opposed to political entities or their rulers.

Second, who are “my brothers and sisters” (adelphoi) to whom a response should be made? Anyone in need, or Christian workers, as in Matthew 10:40–42? The word adelphoi is applied in Matthew 7:3–5 to any person; so here, too, context suggests that aid be distributed uncritically, whether or not the needy one is a believer.

II. The Commissioning in Mark (Read Mark 16:14–20.)

Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written down. The earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of Mark end the Epistle abruptly at verse 8, dropping verses 9–20 entirely. Some scholars feel that the last part was a later addition. (If so, this would mitigate some of the problems associated with verse 18, in particular, a text that has been the cause of some unusual religious practices.)

III. Discipleship and the Gospel

The word gospel means, basically, good news. It’s the good news that Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. It means that the penalty for our sins has been paid in full. It means that no matter our past, we can stand perfect before God right now. It means that God will forgive us anything that we have ever done wrong, no matter what. It means that we can have a whole new start in God. It means that the perfect life of Jesus is now credited to us, as if we, ourselves, lived as sinlessly as did Christ. It means that we now can be connected with the Lord, who will give us the power to live a life of faith and obedience. It means that we are no longer cut off from God and aliens from His eternal kingdom. It means that we are now the “children of God.” It means that we are now part of His heavenly family.

Is it any wonder it is called “good news”?

What else does the “good news” entail? Write down a whole list of other things that it means.

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Consider This: Sometimes congregations become judgmental and demanding in their message. Some talk more about what we are failing
The Commissioning in Luke

**Read** Luke 24:36–53, another account of Jesus appearing to His disciples and giving them the call to preach to the world.

In this account, as the disciples gathered, the two disciples who met the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus joined them and shared their encounter. During their discussion, Jesus joined them.

**Read** this account. What were the first two things that Jesus did to help increase the faith of the disciples?

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Notice, however, that Jesus did not stop with just giving them physical evidence, evidence that they could see and feel. No, that was only part of it. He then took them into the Scriptures, showing them from the Word of God that what had happened to Him had been predicted.

**What** lesson should Christ’s use of the Scriptures here teach us?

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We see an important principle here: Sure, experiences, physical manifestations, and miracles all have their role and can have a major part in giving people what they need in order to have faith in Jesus. At the same time, however, Scripture must be the foundation of all of our faith. Despite the miracles, Jesus affirmed their faith, using the Scriptures to do it. He used the Scriptures to confirm all that had happened to Him and buttress all that He had said to them. *If Jesus Himself used the Scriptures to justify all that He did, how much more so should we?*

Christ’s words and actions here are a stinging, powerful rebuke against any and all attempts to weaken the crucial and foundational role of the Bible in the life of the church and in our work as disciples.

**There are so many forces, even within the church, that work to weaken our trust in the Bible. What are some of these forces, and how can we protect ourselves from anything that calls into question the authority of the Scriptures?**
Learning Cycle  C O N T I N U E D  

to do than what God has already done, causing people to lose hope. How much of what happens in your congregation is really good news to people?

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IV. The Commissioning in Luke

The similarity between this commissioning and Matthew’s is the promise of Divine presence. In Matthew, after giving an evangelistic plan (make disciples, baptize, and teach), Jesus says, “‘Lo, I am with you always, even to the very end of the age’” (Matt. 28:20, NKJV). The parallel in Luke 24 is verse 49: “‘I am going to send you what my Father has promised,’ namely, ‘power from on high’” (NIV).

Consider This: How does Mark’s description of divine power for witnessing (1:14–20) differ from these?

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“Witnesses of These Things”

• None of us has witnessed firsthand the events that the disciples did, from whence they derived such evangelistic power. From what in your life do you draw power to witness to others? (See Mark 5:19.)

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STEP 3—Practice!

Hymns About the Good News

This lesson revolves around an understanding of the blessings and respon-
“Witnesses of These Things”

Yesterday, in looking at the Great Commission as presented in Luke, we saw the primacy that Jesus gave to the Scriptures, that He used them to justify all that had happened. He also used the Scriptures to give the disciples their commission to the world.

**According** to Jesus, what was the message of the Scriptures that the disciples were to take to the world? See Luke 24:45–48. How does this fit in with what we looked at in Tuesday’s lesson? How does this fit in with our understanding of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14?

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Here again, central to the whole call to make disciples is the death and resurrection of Jesus, all for the *remission of sins*. Jesus Himself points not just to the events that surrounded His life and death but to the meaning of those events. This is what Jesus told them to preach to the world. What would make their testimony so powerful, too, was that He said to them, “ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48); that is, the things surrounding His death and resurrection.

**How** do the following texts help us to understand the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection? Rom. 5:6–10; 1 Cor. 5:7; 15:3, 4; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:22–25.

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The disciples apparently were powerful witnesses, too. What began in Jerusalem as primarily a Jewish affair became a worldwide movement within 50 years. Acts 1–7 show the growth in Jerusalem and Judea; chapters 8–12 show how persecution and other influences took the movement beyond to Samaria, Ethiopia, Syria, and other Gentile territories. Acts 13–28 show how Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor turned Christian, took it in ever-widening circles until it reached Rome.
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

sibilities of the gospel. Hymns are a marvelous place to find powerful expressions of the gospel. Lead your class in singing and analyzing a few hymns about good news. (One verse of each hymn should be sufficient.) What good news item is highlighted in each?

No. 300 — “Rock of Ages” (God’s forgiveness)
No. 159 — “The Old Rugged Cross” (Christ’s death for us)
No. 526 — “Because He Lives” (Christ’s resurrection)
No. 363 — “Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service” (mercy)
No. 358 — “Far and Near the Fields are Teeming” (sharing the good news)
No. 213 — “Lift Up the Trumpet” (Second Coming)
No. 206 — “Face to Face” (resurrection and heaven)
No. 223 — “Crown Him With Many Crowns” (Jesus’ eternal reign)

STEP 4—Apply!

Most of us are stopped in our desire to witness to the good news by several considerations:

“I don’t know what to say.”
It is not intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures that qualifies you to witness. Jesus qualified evangelists not because of how much they knew but because of what they had seen and experienced of God’s power in their own lives.

“I don’t want to be a pest.”
People are understandably resistant to head-on challenges to their religious beliefs. Yet, almost no one will reject you should you bring them unalloyed good news—e.g., God is with you, He loves you, will solve your problems, and death is not the end. After telling someone such good news, it may seem natural to invite him or her into a community (your church) that is permeated with good news.

“Why should they listen to me?”
There is only one reason: that they see something in you that they want to have in their own lives. As Jesus said to one man, “‘Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you’” (Mark 5:19, NIV).

“Let the subject be made distinct and plain that it is not possible to effect anything in our standing before God or in the gift of God to us through creature merit. Should faith and works purchase the gift of salvation for anyone, then the Creator is under obligation to the creature. Here is an opportunity for falsehood to be accepted as truth. If any man can merit salvation by anything he may do, then he is in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for his sins. Salvation, then, is partly of debt, that may be earned as wages. If man cannot, by any of his good works, merit salvation, then it must be wholly of grace, received by man as a sinner because he receives and believes in Jesus. It is wholly a free gift. Justification by faith is placed beyond controversy. And all this controversy is ended, as soon as the matter is settled that the merits of fallen man in his good works can never procure eternal life for him.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pp. 19, 20.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How do we understand Mark 16:16? Is Jesus saying that you have to be baptized to be saved? In what ways does the text itself supply the answer? What is our understanding, as a church, of the meaning and importance of baptism?

2. Think about your local church and how it fits in with the worldwide mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as given to us in the texts for this week. What role does your church have? What part is it playing? How can you, working through even your Sabbath School class, help get your church more involved in the work of spreading the gospel to all nations?

3. Why is it so important for us, as disciples, to understand the gospel before we can be effective witnesses for Jesus? What is your understanding of the gospel? Write it out in a single paragraph. Bring it to class and be prepared to share it with others there. What insights can you gain from the above Ellen G. White quote?

4. What more can your local church do to help the poor and the needy in your area? What kind of commitment does your church have to this important aspect of being a disciple?
Patterns of Discipleship

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

During this quarter, we have looked at Jesus, the disciple-gathering Teacher. We have looked at those He chose to follow Him, the training He gave, the behavior He modeled, and the instructions He gave. From Him we have been given all that we need to be disciples.

This week recaps some of the main highlights of this quarter’s study. It seeks to ascertain some of the traits, themes, and practices of Jesus that may have positively influenced the disciples—elements that must form the foundation of our work as disciples, as well. Ultimately, the goal is to seek applications that can provide patterns for discipleship in the twenty-first century.

The Week at a Glance: What role should compassion and forgiveness have in the life and ministry of disciples? What model did Jesus give to us regarding how we should treat the marginalized, the outcasts, and those from ethnic backgrounds different from our own? How important is the church itself in the work of discipleship? What can we learn from Jesus about the centrality of prayer?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 29.
Compassion and Forgiveness

When Jesus was here, He displayed compassion, sometimes translated pity (see Matt. 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34, Luke 7:13). In Greek, the word most commonly translated “compassion” or “pity” gives the idea of someone being moved to the very depths of his or her being. If, in our fallen condition, with our hard, selfish hearts, we can be moved with pity and compassion for others, how much more so would the sight of suffering humanity touch the innermost being of the sinless Son of God?

Look up those references listed above. What were the things that Jesus showed compassion over? Why is such compassion so important for us as disciples?

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Besides compassion, Jesus showed forgiveness. Time and again the disciples observed Jesus forgive the sins of so many people. They saw how He treated Simon, the former leper, who looked down on Mary (Luke 7:36–50). The disciples saw Jesus’ ultimate act of forgiveness in His prayer for His enemies while they hung Him on the cross (Luke 23:34). Peter, too, experienced Jesus’ forgiveness in a special way. At the arrest, he forsook Jesus and fled. Later at the trial, three times he denied knowing Jesus. Yet, Jesus forgave him and restored him to fellowship in the presence of his fellow disciples (John 21:9–17).


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Our God is a compassionate God, and one result of that compassion was that He chose to save us from our sins, to forgive what, otherwise, would have led to our eternal loss. How crucial that, as disciples, we keep before ourselves this compassion and forgiveness; after all, what better motivation could we have for leading others to, and nurturing them in, what means so much to us?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** Mark 1:40–45

**The Student Will:**
- **Know:** Recall that Jesus is the pattern for compassion.
- **Feel:** Sense the compassion Jesus felt for outcasts.
- **Do:** Emulate Jesus’ compassion toward all.

**Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Jesus, the Pattern of Compassion

A. Jesus was “moved with compassion” at the leper’s request for healing. In Greek the word *compassion* means someone moved to the very depths of his being. What do Jesus’ actions tell us this kind of compassion means?

B. Mark uses the word *moved*, to describe the compassion Jesus felt, turning love into an action that flowed out from Him in a healing touch. Why must true compassion, which starts as a feeling, end up in action? Conversely, why must every action spring from love?

II. Feel: Rooted in the Gospel

A. What does Jesus say to the leper before touching Him? What does His willingness and readiness reveal about the need to be ready to help others that come to us?

B. Jesus didn’t have to touch the leper to heal Him. He healed others at a distance. Why was touch so important in this case? What does it teach us about the importance of human contact and of treating those we help with dignity and respect?

III. Do: Following the Pattern

A. How has compassion—either helping someone else or being the recipient of compassion—aﬀected your life?

B. What does Jesus’ example tell us about dealing with others?

C. How can we turn compassion into action?

**Summary:** To be a disciple of Jesus means to live His life of compassion.
The Ostracized and Marginalized

Jesus’ ministry and training of His disciples took place in a highly stratified society. The lines were clearly drawn between men and women, religious hierarchy and the common people, rich and poor, and Pharisees and publicans. The woman’s place was in the home, and then only certain portions of it.

Read Luke 16:19–31. What message about class distinctions is pictured here? From this parable, what can we learn about how the Lord viewed the attitude and actions of the wealthy establishment?

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Read Luke 18:9–14 and answer the same questions, this time about how Jesus viewed the actions and attitudes of the religious establishment.

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Jesus neither followed nor advocated the status quo, because He obviously saw many of the problems that had arisen in it. Instead, He openly associated with, taught, and advocated for the marginalized people in His society. In the Gospels we can see the kind of people that Jesus worked with and for. Sure, He sought to reach the upper classes as well, but at the same time He ministered to Gentiles, disreputable women, lepers, publicans, demoniacs, Romans, those with disabilities, the blind, the poor, a whole host of those considered outcasts, marginalized in one way or another from society.

Again, considering what He came to the world to do, to die for the sins of every human being, it makes perfect sense that while He was here He would minister to everyone who would be ministered to.

What is your attitude toward the marginalized and outcasts in your society? What is your church’s attitude toward them? How can you tell if you really care or if you are just expressing the expected platitudes?
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

The best way to teach this lesson is to present each day’s topic as a significant attitude or practice that Jesus brought to His ministry and (to the point) that shaped His training of the disciples. After a whole quarter of studying discipleship, it may be a good time to remind your class that being a disciple isn’t just a matter of a single, one-time decision to believe in Jesus but a lifelong commitment to following Him. The attitudes and practices of discipleship must be remembered, renewed, and practiced throughout one’s life. Compassion and forgiveness, seeking the marginalized and including the ostracized, encouraging diversity and acceptance, participating in the work of ministry and prayer—none of these automatically falls into place at the moment of conversion. Each requires intention, discipline, and lifelong self-examination.

Consider This: The Greek philosopher Socrates famously said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” How can we help Christians to be willing to examine their lives in order to go beyond simple professions of belief and lists of doctrines to actually living and acting like Christ?

STEP 2—Explore!

Bible Commentary

I. Compassion and Forgiveness

The Greek word used in Matthew 14:14 and elsewhere concerning Jesus’ compassion originates in the word for entrails or organs (splanchna, pronounced SPLANK-na). In the form in which it is used of Jesus’ feelings, (splanchnizomai, pronounced splank-NEEZ-oh-my), it means literally that His organs were convulsed by what He saw—that He was emotionally

CONTINUED
Diversity and Discrimination

Yesterday we saw how Jesus ministered to the downtrodden, the outcasts of society. Today we want to focus on that a little more but with the emphasis more on national or ethnic diversity.

Ethnic and national bigotry was very common in the ancient world. Various groups saw themselves as superior to those around them. The ancient Greeks, for instance, viewed non-Greeks as barbarians. All through ancient literature we find this kind of bigotry. Unfortunately, Jesus’ contemporaries were not immune to that same kind of thinking, no matter how exalted their religious profession.

Read Exodus 12:38; 18:1; Numbers 12:1; Ruth 1:16, 17; and Matthew 23:15. What should these texts tell us about the ethnic diversity that made up the nation of Israel?

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From its beginning as a nation, Israel was never a pure stock. The idea of a pure lineage is a more modern conception, an offspring of evolutionary ideology. God has made all humanity “one blood” (Acts 17:26); we are all offspring of Adam and Eve, our first parents. And through faith in Jesus, we all—regardless of color, nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion—become the “sons of God” (John 1:12).

This point cannot be overemphasized: Christ’s death on the cross, for every human being, should once and for all denude all disciples of any sense of ethnic or national superiority. More so, it should remove all sense of bigotry toward any group of people. Before Jesus on the cross, upon whom all our sin, everyone’s, fell, we all stand equal. More than anyone else in the world, Christ’s disciples, those who follow Him, should be purged of the kind of prejudices and ethnic tensions that seem to be inbred in every culture and society. In the end, there are only two classes of people: the saved and the lost. And we who are saved should be busy going around, as did our Master, seeking to find the lost and pointing them to the only thing that makes us different from them, the promise of salvation that we have claimed for ourselves.

To what degree have you been tainted with the prejudices and bigotries inherent in your own society?
moved so deeply as to have physical symptoms. This, then, is no casual pity—a shake of the head and a click of the tongue and walking on—but a gut-wrenching experience of empathy and love that spurred Jesus to help.

II. The Ostracized and Marginalized

Though Mahatma Gandhi was not a Christian, he once advised some Christian missionaries with regard to their attitude toward the poor and marginalized. “It would be poor comfort to the world if it had to depend upon a historical God who died 2,000 years ago. Do not then preach the God of history, but show Him as He lives today through you. . . . It is better to allow our lives to speak for us than our words.”

**Consider This:** We Adventists have a number of distinctive teachings that we articulate to the world. Do our lives speak as clearly as our words?

III. Diversity and Discrimination *(Read Acts 17:24–26.)*

“This pairing of one God with one species implies that the ‘many’ who physically descended from common parents . . . share an inherent religious sensibility, whether this God is recognized or not.”—The New Interpreter’s Bible, vol. X, p. 247.

**Consider This:** Do you agree with this statement? If so, what are the implications of our sharing a “common religious sensibility” with Muslims, Buddhists, even atheists, who don’t recognize the Christian God? *(Compare Romans 1:18–20.)*

IV. The Church

“[The church] is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 12.
The Church

As we have seen all through this quarter, God calls us as disciples to do many things: spread the gospel, minister to the outcasts and the needy, make disciples, and on and on. And this should be happening in every nation around the world. The question is: How are we supposed to do this?

How do the following texts help answer the above question? Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:14–22; Eph. 4:11–13; Col. 1:17, 18.

Jesus was indeed a disciple-gathering teacher. He used every opportunity to call, train, educate, and nurture disciples. He was never too busy to help a needy soul. Disciple-training was at the center of His ministry.

We believe and suggest strongly that just as the tasks of disciple-making, teaching, training, and nurturing were central to Jesus’ ministry, even so they must be central to the mission of every church in the twenty-first century.

Yet, no one can do it alone. That is why there is the church. Nor is that task limited to pastors, Bible workers, elders, deacons, and other church officers. It is the task of every member; Jesus’ commission excluded no disciple. Christ’s words, “Go ye” (Matt. 28:19), means you.

Some members may feel uncomfortable with this idea because they lack training. Yet, when Jesus called fishermen for discipleship, they were untrained. He had to train them. Likewise, every church must make provisions for the discipling of every member. Each new member should be placed in a discipleship class for training and nurture. Advanced classes for seasoned disciples must be instituted, and every trained disciple should be put to work for the Master.

Before departing, Jesus gave His disciples the mission to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). This command has not changed. This gospel of the kingdom still must be preached in all the world before the end comes (Matt. 24:14). Unless Jesus were to make the stones cry out to complete the task, He has no other agents than His church to do the job.

How involved are you in the work that Jesus has called us all to do? Or are you too busy doing your own thing? When are you going to make the changes you know in your heart should have been made long ago?
Consider This: How does your being a player in “the theater of His grace” equip you to assist your pastor in spreading the gospel?

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V. The Prayer Factor

Jesus had only about three years in which to do the most important activities that anyone had ever done in the history of the world. One would assume that He would work continually to get it all done. Yet, the striking thing about Jesus (as pointedly illustrated in this lesson’s texts) is that the busier He got, the heavier His responsibilities; the bigger the decisions facing Him, the more likely He was to take time for prayer.

Consider This: When faced with a major decision or crisis, how likely are you to spend thoughtful, contemplative time in prayer, preparing for it?

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STEP 3—Practice!

Perhaps your Sabbath School class could be the catalyst for incorporating discipleship attitudes and practices into church life. Consider the following ideas and attempt to interest your class in doing one of them.

• Look around for the people in your congregation who don’t stand out from the crowd. Make a plan for your class members to pointedly make their acquaintance. Organize a Sabbath lunch for people to whom others rarely pay much attention. (This must be done, of course, with diplomacy and care.)

• Ask your pastor or elder if your class can plan a “Diversity Sabbath.” You may invite someone of a different ethnic or national background to speak to you. Or interview an immigrant, or a handicapped person,
The Prayer Factor

Read the following quote from Ellen G. White. What principles can we take away from this for ourselves?

“The Majesty of heaven, while engaged in His earthly ministry, prayed much to His Father. He was frequently bowed all night in prayer. . . . The Mount of Olives was the favorite resort of the Son of God for His devotions. Frequently after the multitude had left Him for the retirement of the night, He rested not, though weary with the labors of the day. . . . While the city was hushed in silence, and the disciples had returned to their homes to obtain refreshment in sleep, Jesus slept not. His divine pleadings were ascending to His Father from the Mount of Olives that His disciples might be kept from the evil influences which they would daily encounter in the world, and that His own soul might be strengthened and braced for the duties and trials of the coming day. All night, while His followers were sleeping, was their divine Teacher praying. The dew and the frost of night fell upon His head bowed in prayer. His example is left for His followers.”—Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 167.

Read the texts below. What were the occasions that prompted these prayers? What can they teach us, as disciples of Christ, about prayer and the centrality of prayer in our mission?

*Luke 5:15, 16*

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*Luke 6:12, 13*

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*Luke 9:28–31*

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If Jesus, the God-Man, relied so much on prayer for success while on earth, how much more do we, as sinful humans, need it for successful discipleship? How satisfied are you with your prayer life? What do you pray about? How much time do you spend praying? What changes might you need to make in your own prayer life?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

to find out how it feels to be different from most others in the culture.

• Interview a pastor about sharing ministry responsibilities with laypeople. What areas of work would he or she most like help with? Is he or she willing to train people in these areas? Ask your pastor whether class members can join him or her to do visits to the hospital or shut-ins, for example, or while giving someone a Bible study.

• Organize your class as a prayer team to pray for one specific event in the life of your congregation (an evangelistic crusade, a church-school event, a mission trip), or a specific person (a needy or ill person, a missionary, a church worker). Several weeks later, evaluate your experience. Did prayer make a difference?

STEP 4—Apply!

It is a sad fact that we Christians have not done as well as we ought to on any of the attitudes and practices highlighted in this week’s lesson. Historically, Christians have been tragically discriminatory and excluding. Some congregations appear no better at forgiveness and compassion, even to one another, than non-Christians. The work of ministry is in most churches left almost entirely to the professional clergy. And we are prone to acting first and praying afterward. In short, the way we Christians “do church” appears to militate against the kind of discipleship Jesus encouraged. These problems must be pointedly and deliberately corrected if we are to succeed in being and making disciples.

Why, when we have so gladly accepted Jesus, have we done so poorly on the tasks of discipleship? While we may affirm John 3:16, if our Christianity goes no further than our saying we believe in Jesus—if we don’t back up our beliefs with inclusive, compassionate, prayerful, participatory discipleship—our profession of faith is relatively meaningless. James correctly observed that you cannot divorce faith from actions: “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? . . . Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:14, 17, NIV).

Here are some of the practical things that our church can do in the area of discipleship:

1. Designate disciple-making as its primary goal.
2. Formulate plans and methods to accomplish the task.
3. Train individuals for leadership for each program.
4. Mobilize all members for involvement in discipleship.
5. Institute a program of discipleship training.
6. Ascertain the types of people living in the community surrounding the church and their needs.
7. Institute a bridge-building program that will break down barriers, then meet the needs of and forge relations with the community surrounding each church.
8. Introduce programs to use the skills of new converts, to incorporate them into the local church, and develop a deeper commitment to Christ.
9. Develop programs that will assist members, especially new converts, in discovering, developing, and putting to use their spiritual gifts.
10. Ensure that there are adequate programs designed for making and nurturing disciples.

Discussion Questions:

1. Take a prayerful look at those steps listed above. What might you add or embellish that would be important for a church to be successful at making disciples? What can you do to help see these steps, or some like them, implemented at your local church level?

2. How much time do you spend in prayer for the work of the church as a whole? Determine to spend a certain amount of time each day praying for our worldwide mission. Why not have your Sabbath School class set aside a certain time during each class to pray for the work of the worldwide church?

3. How can we help both the clergy and the laity better understand that the work of discipleship is the work of every member of the church? How can you help the local church better utilize the gifts and talents of members? What are the kinds of things that tend to get in the way of the laity being involved in the work of discipleship and witness?