

Following Jesus: Discipleship¹ in Action



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 23

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 8:14, 15; Matthew 10:34–37; Matthew 28:18–20; Luke 5:17–26.

MEMORY VERSE: “If he wants to save his life, he will lose it. But if he loses his life for me and for the good news, he will save it. What good is it if someone gains the whole world but loses his soul? Or what can anyone trade for his soul?” (Mark 8:35–37, NIV).

THIS WEEK'S LESSON ASKS US TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IS INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP. We want to look at discipleship in action. God has called us, but each must accept that call and follow its leadings. Thomas Cameron tells of a famous preacher who said he would have loved “to have blown the trumpet for Handel, a famous musician. He also would have picked up the fallen brush for Michelangelo, a famous Italian artist. He would have held the spyglass for Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of America. Or he would have carried Shakespeare's bag. If men think it an honor to do some humble service for the world's great heroes, what greater honor it would mean to serve the Savior of all men?”—Adapted from A. Gordon Nasby, edition, *Treasury of the Christian World*, page 327.

THE WEEK'S LESSON IN BRIEF (SHORT): What should be our reasons for service as disciples?² What kind of attacks should we expect? What promises do we have as we begin the work of discipleship?

1. discipleship—the practice of accepting Jesus and following Him.

2. disciples—people who accept and obey Christ.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 24**SERVICE AND DISCIPLESHIP
(Luke 4:38, 39)**

What can we learn from Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29–31; and Luke 4:38, 39 about discipleship? What principles have we learned that we all should use as disciples?

All three of these stories show that Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. But Luke alone says she was suffering from a high fever. Some people believe this detail shows us that Luke was a doctor. This is because the detail itself in the Greek language means a certain kind of fever.

All the stories show that the disciples told Jesus about Peter's mother-in-law being sick. They also asked for His help. We should guess that Jesus already knew all about her problem. But He still let them tell Him and ask for His healing. What lesson could we learn from this about our responsibility as disciples? Is this really discipleship or just plain hospitality?

After Peter's mother-in-law was healed, she did not try to avoid service (work). When she got well, she found a houseful of tired and hungry guests who had worried about her. She did not make an excuse for being too tired from the illness. Rather, she

quickly served them. The Greek word for how she acted is almost the same as the meaning for a "servant," "minister," or "deacon." Inspired by Jesus, she began her service as soon as she got well.



Peter's mother-in-law fed her household after Jesus healed her. Serving others shows Jesus how thankful we are for all He has done for us.

What has Christ done for you? What has He saved you from? What has been your answer? In what ways should the whole Christian life be an answer to what Jesus has done for us?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 25**JESUS AND THE PARALYTIC³
(Luke 5:17–26)**

A well-known story is found in Luke 5:17–26. This is the story of Jesus

3. paralytic—a person who has paralysis, a disease that makes him or her unable to move his or her body or limbs (arms and/or legs).

healing the paralytic. From it we can learn some important lessons about discipleship in action.

What powerful and important point from Luke 5:17 can be found there? What message of warning should it have for us too?

Leaders and teachers of the law came from all over to hear Jesus. The verse says that at the time, the “power of the Lord was present to heal them” (NKJV). This means that 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.

The story shows 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 find another way. Think about how hard they worked for their friend. How easily they could have given up! Notice, too, how Jesus accepted their faith. The verses do not say if they had been healed by Jesus. What we do know is that their works truly showed their faith. They acted as disciples when they brought a needy person to Jesus.

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



The friends of the paralytic acted as disciples when they brought their needy friend to Jesus to heal.

Meanwhile the leaders secretly complained about how Jesus “broke” the law. They let their religion, faith, and false teaching prevent themselves from having a living experience with Jesus. What a lesson to us all!

In what ways can we, who claim to be disciples of Christ, let things prevent the Lord from working in our lives, or even in the lives of others? What are some of the things that we hold dear in our hearts that can prevent us from recognizing the power of God? Most important, how can we get rid of them?

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 26**“TO SEND FIRE ON THE EARTH”
(Matthew 10:34–37; Luke 12:49–53)**

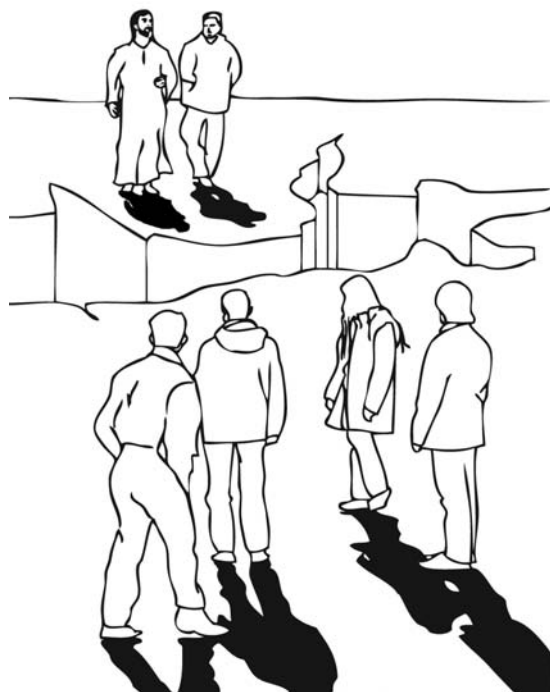
Christianity most often means peace. At Jesus’ birth, the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2:14, NKJV). Even more important, Christianity preaches love, not hate, even for our enemies. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). So, how do we understand what Jesus is saying in Matthew 10:34–37?

“Jesus removes some of the disciples’ mistaken ideas that their message would bring peace. They were not to be surprised if problems arose in their house-to-house work. . . . When a [person] accepts Christ, his closest friends often turn out to be [the] most bitter enemies. This is often true in both heathen lands and Christian lands. Often those who claim to be Christians can become the worst enemies. They know very little of God’s power to change spiritual life.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 379, 380.

You have had experience as a Christian. From what you know of Jesus through other verses, what do you believe Jesus is telling us? And why are these words so important for discipleship? Read also Matthew 10:24, 25.

The important point to remember is that following Jesus will cost us big. If it does not, then perhaps something is wrong. Maybe we are fooling ourselves. In the end, we must understand that our witness and life of discipleship can divide us from those to whom we are the closest. It does not always have to be that way, but Jesus wants us to know that it can happen. We are not to be surprised by it when it does happen.

What has following Christ cost you? What have you learned in your own experience that could help someone else who is struggling?



Our witness and life of discipleship can divide us from those to whom we are closest.

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 27**THE WORTH OF OUR SOULS
(Mark 8:35–37)**

A magazine article told about a special high school where students were doing very good work. They were doing much better than most other students in the same age group anywhere else in the country. These kids seemed to show that they would become future stars or 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 how we succeed 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! 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 (heritage, history) will we leave behind? Thousands of years ago, Solomon studied these same issues (read Ecclesiastes 1 and Ecclesiastes 2). And he decided that this life with all its toils (hard work) and troubles, was all in vain (for nothing). Solomon used the word *vanity* to describe how empty this life is. And that word comes from a Hebrew word that means “breath,” or “vapor.”

With this in mind, read over the verses for today, and ask yourself, “What kind of life should I be living? What does it mean to lose my life for the sake of the gospel (the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins)?” What could it cost us here, in this life, to be actively involved in discipleship? What changes do you need to make to be truly a disciple of Christ?

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 28**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE
DISCIPLES”
(Matthew 28:18–20, NKJV)**

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

Read through Matthew 28:18–20 again. Focus on what Jesus said in the beginning about all authority (or power) being given to Him in heaven and in earth. (Read Luke 1:32; Acts 10:36; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:13). Why are those words so important for all who have a part in the work of making disciples?

Notice, too, what Jesus says about this work. The disciples are to teach all nations. No favorites here, no geo-

graphical or national limits! The death of Christ was for all people everywhere (Romans 5:17–19; Hebrews 2:9). So, it makes sense that the gospel command (Matthew 28:18–20) would be for all people (Revelation 14:6, 7).

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



The death of Christ was for all people everywhere. So, the gospel must go everywhere to reach them.

Discipleship is action. Those who become disciples are those who obey and do Jesus' commands. With these words, Jesus fully destroys any ideas that salvation⁴ means just accepting doctrinal truths. Yes, accepting the doctrinal truths is part of what it means to be a disciple. But it does not stop there. Disciples are those who follow Jesus. And we follow Jesus by obeying Him. And we do not obey Him just 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, how real that promise is? Think about the example of Christ living in you. Write and/or say a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for what Jesus has done and is doing in your life.

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, pages 379–381, 746–750; Ellen G. White, “The First Evangelists,” pages 350–358; “Who Is the Greatest?” pages 433–436, in *The Desire of Ages*; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Discipleship and the Cross,” pages 85–104, in *The Cost of Discipleship*; Mark 16:15–20; John 14–17.

“Jesus commanded His disciples not to hope that the gospel would overcome the world’s enemies, and that they would stop attacking it. Jesus said, ‘I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ These attacks are not the result of the gospel. Instead they are the result of people fighting against the gospel. Of all attacks, the hardest to accept is differences [disagreements; arguments] in families and the division [separation] of dearest earthly friends. But Jesus announces, ‘Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me’ [Matthew 10:37, NIV].”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The*

4. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.

Desire of Ages, page 357.

“Jesus blessed the requirements of the fifth commandment. He rebuked [criticized] the attempt to avoid one’s responsibilities [duties] toward his or her parents. . . . But love for one’s parents must always come second to obedience to God in every way. Love to God and service for Him are to be the supreme rule of life, ‘the first and great commandment.’ . . . But ‘the second’ table [set] of the Ten Commandments, which holds the fifth commandment, is almost as important as the first four commandments.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, page 380.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Do you know of anyone suffering now directly because of his or her faith

to Jesus? If so, how can you help? What can you as a person, or as a Sabbath School class, or as a church, do to bring some relief?

❷ Think more about the verses for Wednesday’s study. What important message is Jesus giving us? Bring your thoughts to class. And as a class, talk about what it means to lose your life for the good of the gospel. What can you learn from one another’s experiences?

❸ 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 take a more active part in this important work? For example, what is being done to help disciple new members?