

## 9. Following the Master: Discipleship in Action (1Q Discipleship 2008)

**Biblical material:** Matt. 8:14, 15; 10:34-37; 28:18-20; Luke 5:17-26.

### Quotes

- Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is usually Judas who writes the biography. *Oscar Wilde*
- To become a disciple means a decisive and irrevocable turning to both God and neighbor. What follows from there is a journey which ... never ends in this life, a journey of continually discovering new dimensions of loving God and neighbor. *David J. Bosch*
- The first and last word for a disciple of Jesus is “Obey!” I mean to say that today the word “believe” is not as important as, “You who believe, obey him whom you believe!” Of what use is believing if you cannot obey?” *Johann Christoph Blumhardt*
- The emphasis to-day is being put on the fact that we have to save men; we have not. We have to exalt the Saviour Who saves men, and then make disciples in His Name. *Oswald Chambers*

### Questions

How does our view of the nature and character of the Master affect the kind of disciples we are? Are we meant to follow the Master in every detail? What about the divine aspects that we don't have? What elements of the life of Jesus are the most significant to us as his disciples—where should our focus be? Why did he really come to do?

### Discussion

The Biblical material references Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law; his 'disturbance' of normal family relationships, the gospel commission, and the healing of the paralytic lowered through the roof.

Certainly the disciples had an active and interesting experience. Perhaps much of the time they were just trying to take it in, to process what was happening, before the next event occurred! It must have been a whirlwind kind of time, and it's not surprising that they didn't always 'get it.' Jesus did invite them to come and talk to him in private, and arranged times of relative peace and quiet, away from the crowds.

In the “Imitation of Christ” by Thomas a Kempis, the supreme goal is to be exactly like Christ as our example. But while we should certainly pay close attention to what Jesus said and did, he was not saying that “if I can do it, you can do it.” This salvation by following the example is dangerous as it points us back to our own works, and validates our salvation by achievement rather than through the Saviour. We are to follow the Master, not to try and copy him exactly. And how could we—for he is God? While we have the same access to the power of God, are we supposed to mimic the ministry of Jesus? This seems close to blasphemy if we are seeking to do this ourselves. However there's no limit to what we can accomplish as we give things over to God, the one who gives us the power to think and to do.

Jesus himself said, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” (Luke 12:49 NIV). Luke 9:54-56 records, “When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.” In what way are we or are we not following the Master?

Maybe this example is too obvious—the disciples clearly had a very different agenda, and completely misrepresented God here. It's not a question of do as you're told or we'll blast you with fire from heaven—which is why Jesus had to reprimand these over-zealous disciples. But we too must make sure our representation of the character of God is correct...

Our role is to reveal the Saviour, not to try and take that role for ourselves. We certainly do need to be far more active, demonstrating the truth about God rather than just talking about it. But the key element is trust, and trustworthiness. Jesus in the end gave up on the miraculous, because it did not bring the thoughtful trust that he wanted. Similarly, we are to show in our lives the kind of people we are as a result of our experience and trust in God, not because of any great miracles we can point to. The confirmation is not because it's amazing, but because it's true!

### **Comment**

“If you pick passages from scripture, irresponsibly, to make a case, you can make God seem precisely the kind of person the devil has made Him out to be.

“This was the problem, you see, that the disciples had when they said to Jesus, “Tell us what the Father is like.” (see Jn 11:8) He said, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you don't know Me?” Philip said, “You've misunderstood our question; we're not asking about You. We've lived with You for three and a half years; we know what You're like.” I suppose they were surprised to find that a divine Person could be so humble and so gracious. They worshipped Him, but they weren't afraid of Him.

“What we want to know,” said the disciples, “is about the Father, that is, the God of the Old Testament. We want to know about the God who terrified Israel at Sinai (Ex. 19,20), the God who burned up Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18,19), and consumed Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10), and drowned all but eight (Gen. 7:13), and turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26), and swallowed up Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their children (Num. 16). We want to know about the God who ordered the stoning of Achan (Joshua 7), and said that illegitimate children should be banished from the camp for ten generations (Deut. 23:2), the One who killed 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35) and the first-born in Egypt (Ex. 12:29,30), etc., etc.”

“Now,” they said to Jesus, “could that God, the Father, be like You?” *A Graham Maxwell*, tape “Faith, Righteousness, and Salvation,” #2.

### **Ellen White Comments**

“He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day.... Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God.” {DA1898, 251 }