

## **Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**

### **First Quarter 2014: *Discipleship***

### **Lesson 2 “Discipling Through Metaphor”**

#### **Read for this week’s study**

2 Sam. 12:1–7; Isa. 28:24–28; Matt. 7:24–27; 13:1–30; Luke 20:9–19.

#### **Memory Text**

“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world’ ” (Matthew 13:34, 35, NIV).

#### **Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. Old Testament Examples
- III. Architectural Wisdom
- IV. Agricultural Analogies
- V. The Revolutionary’s War
- VI. Christ’s Creative Legacy
- VII. Further Study

#### **Questions and Notes for Consideration**

##### **Moderator: Daniel Duda**

1. “Jesus framed eternal truths in ways that went beyond mere intellect alone. Jesus spoke through concrete pictures drawn from everyday life in order to reach people where they were. Children and adults could understand deep truths delivered through parables wrapped in images and metaphors. Meanwhile, complex concepts like justification, righteousness, and sanctification were easily grasped through the Master Storyteller’s art. In other words, concepts that are often difficult to grasp in ordinary language can be taught through symbols and metaphors.” (Sabbath afternoon) What is the significance of the fact that Jesus used metaphors, analogies and pictures from everyday life?
2. “Isaiah’s parable teaches about God’s unlimited mercy during times of punishment. The twelfth chapter of Hebrews likewise understands God’s punishments as tools for correction rather than weapons for vengeance. Divine punishments reflected their redemptive purposes; they were sufficient to encourage repentance, revival, and reformation. Nevertheless, when greater stubbornness and rebellion occurred,

- greater punishments followed.” (Sunday’s lesson) When we ask the question “how” does punishment work, what are the dangers of coming up with our own models?
3. What is the significance of the metaphors that the prophets used in the Old Testament? “What is it about storytelling that makes it such a powerful way of expressing truth? What are some of your favorite stories, and why do you like them?” (Sunday’s lesson) In what way can it be related to the fact that the Bible meta narrative came to us in the form of a story (yet the Bible contains a lot of non-narrative material!)
  4. Monday’s lesson deals with architectural metaphors used by Jesus: “Building entails preparation. Cost estimates are developed long before actual construction commences. Discipleship likewise involves preparation. Miraculous feedings, spectacular healing, and apparent success could lead prospective disciples to assume that following Jesus was easy. Jesus encouraged His listeners, however, to study the complete picture. Self-sacrifice, suffering, humiliation, and rejection constituted considerable costs. Notice once again that Jesus chose to convey this message using metaphorical language when He could have just offered a checklist of specific drawbacks that His disciples might encounter.” Why does a metaphor accomplish what a checklist cannot?
  5. Tuesday’s lesson concentrates on the first two (out of seven) parables listed in Matthew 13. How have they been traditionally understood?

“Jesus is challenging His listeners to evaluate their standing as disciples. Rather than confronting each individual specifically, He speaks through parables, inviting disciples to confront themselves. Looking into their soul’s mirror, they can evaluate their materialistic tendencies, review their capacity for perseverance, analyze their worldly entanglements, and choose the lifestyle of uncompromising discipleship. At the same time, true discipleship places judgment (condemnation) in the hands of the Master, not those of the disciple. Human discernment is incomplete, human knowledge partial. God alone possesses faultless understanding. Jesus warns, too, that satanic infiltration does happen. Disciples cannot surrender their judgment (discernment) to other professed believers because these believers may be weeds not wheat.” (Tuesday’s lesson) Why did Jesus tell the parable of the sower and the parable of the weeds? How do they function within Matthew’s Gospel?
  6. “Christ’s tactics and strategies caught many leaders off guard; they were ill-equipped to counter the power of His appeal with the masses. Many of His parables contained messages that worked against the leaders. The religious leaders rightly saw that their influence would be largely curtailed wherever Christ’s message penetrated the people’s hearts.” (Wednesday’s lesson) Why did Christ find it necessary to expose the leaders of His day and curtail their influence?
  7. “However expressed, the principle remains the same: metaphors, similes, parables, allegories, and other examples of creative language enable us to communicate in an understandable manner. Building upon the listener’s experiences, Christ and His disciples used comparisons and illustrations that stimulated an understanding of

- truth. We should, when appropriate, not be afraid to do the same.” (Thursday’s lesson) What is the significance of the fact that the rest of the New Testament authors did not use metaphors, parables, etc. in as significant a way as Christ did?”
8. Thinking about discipleship (spiritual formation), the Christian life can be compared to a motorboat, a raft, or a sailboat. In a **motorboat** analogy, the driver is in charge of where he or she is going, and how quickly he gets there. “Transformation” is just a matter of making enough effort. The second model is a raft. In their spiritual life, some people put such an emphasis on grace over works that they ignore Scripture’s commands to action. Then life drifts like a **raft**. In the **sailboat** analogy, the sailor knows he cannot move without the wind (the work of the Holy Spirit). Therefore the sailor is always observing where the wind is at work, to determine “How should I set the sails?”
  9. Two of these mindsets will frustrate or stifle people’s growth. The third is a healthy but difficult balance to strike. What do you do as an individual or a church—consciously or unconsciously—that might push people toward one or another of these perspectives regarding spiritual formation? Do you think more people in your church lean toward the model of the motorboat or the raft? Why? What could you do in your church to prod people toward active, yet Spirit-dependent, growth?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

You see, back with Moses, He said, “I don’t have to talk in dark speech, in figures, in symbols to Moses. We’re friends. We can talk plainly to each other.” And Christ tried to establish that relationship with His disciples. What do you suppose He’d rather have with us? Now, He couldn’t talk to the multitudes that way at the foot of Sinai. In fact, when He talked to them they were so terrified, they said, “Don’t let God speak to us.” Here God wants to talk face to face, and they said, “No, don’t let Him speak to us. You come between, Moses. You speak to God and then you speak to us. We don’t want Him talking to us lest we die.” And Jesus says, “I don’t like anyone coming in between. I like to treat you as My friends.” Remember elsewhere in John He says, “So far I’ve called you My servants; I’d like to begin calling you My friends. Because a master doesn’t tell a servant what his plans are, but a man does tell his friends, and I wish to speak to you as friends and tell you all that My Father has told Me.”

Now, how many could He talk to like that in the Bible? It is interesting that when Jesus grew a little weary with the twelve, it wasn’t always comfortable with them. You know, they were always arguing about such subjects as the positions they’d hold in the kingdom. There was a family of a brother and two sisters with whom He could relax and tell them things that He couldn’t tell the twelve. Isn’t that extraordinary? Lazarus, Mary and Martha, even though Mary was known as a wicked woman in the town. They loved to listen. Besides, Martha must have made lovely meals, you remember? It was a nice place to go. They had a nice home. They were educated people, and Jesus just loved to escape every once in awhile to be with them, for they

behaved more like friends rather than servants. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 - Deuteronomy, recorded November, 1981, Riverside California}

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/9MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/10MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

So personally, I would thank God for all the legal provisions, every one of them. We needed them. In an emergency, you need emergency measures.

But you don't want to live in an emergency forever. So He would like us to come to the place where we thank Him for the emergency measures, and come back to what He really wanted, when He said in Jeremiah, chapter seven, "When I brought you out of Egypt, I said nothing about ceremonies and laws and rites and things. I just said let me be your God, and you be my people. But you wouldn't listen. You were so stubborn, you went backwards instead of forward," so you know what He had to do thereafter.

Then in the new covenant He says, "Someday I'll write my law in your heart, then you don't have to think about it, just do it." Then He says, "I will be your God and you will be my people, and you'll all know me." And to know in the Bible is to love. To know with friendship and intimacy, even as a husband his wife. . . . And God says, "That's the way I want it to be; you know me, and I know you." Then everything is solved. You don't have war between people who know each other in this light. But you can see then how then the whole content of Scripture is read in another way. It is a record of God's demonstration of the kind of person He is. And some of us look at it, and say we like very much what we see. And so we come to know Him as a friend.

That's why I didn't get home until 1:00 from Sabbath School today, someone stayed to raise questions afterwards about all the legal language in the Bible.

Now, this particular individual is a very sincere person, and I admire his enthusiasm; it's most admirable. But he says, since most of the Bible is in such terminology, it appeared to him, why would you take a few little places in John, even though they're labeled "clear" by the Son of God Himself, and stack them up against all this other? And what he had in mind was John 16:26, where Jesus said, "Up to now I've spoken to you in parables, symbols, figures of speech, metaphors, proverbs"; that's much of the Bible. "From now on I don't want to speak to you in that way. From now on I'd like to speak to you plainly and clearly about my Father." And they waited breathlessly for what He would say. "There's no need for me to intercede with the Father for you, for the Father loves you Himself." They said, "Now you are talking plainly." But they didn't pursue the subject at all, so He couldn't say more.

Do you realize the implications of that? That the one who came as our mediator and intercessor, and who pictures Himself as a great high priest, and you better beware, and don't try to approach God without a kind friend in between, and all that kind of thing. He says, "Really, there's no need. It's just you think there is, because you're so scared of God. Besides," Jesus said to them, at the same time He made this remark in the upper room, "do you realize who I am?" And they were moving gradually toward it, but He finally had to pray "Father, glorify me with the glory that I had with You in the beginning. Let these men know that I'm God." It never fully dawned on them until later. Because if they had acknowledged it; "Yes, you're not only the Son of God, You are God. Fully, equally God", then Jesus could have said, "Then how come we've been talking here for three and a half years without an intercessor in between?" "Oh, we have an intercessor; we have You." "No. Let me go back over that again" He might say. Now, His need to go back over things is illustrated by His conversation with Phillip. He said, "If you you've seen me, you've seen the Father. If you trust me, you trust the Father. I'm going to my Father to prepare a place for you." And they said, "Tell us about the Father. We really want to know about the Father." He said, "After all I've done, and all I've said in chapter 12, you don't know me, Phillip?" And Phillip said, "There, you missed our question again. We don't want to know about You, we want to know about the Father. You know, the God of the Old Testament, all the way through." And Jesus said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Don't you really believe I and the Father are one? We're exactly the same." Well, it never really dawned; the significance of that never really dawned on them.

And I believe it hasn't on us to the present day. Because if Jesus is fully God, God talked even to sinners, when He was here. He talked to His betrayer, Judas, without anybody in between. That is, if Jesus really is God, do we want to be heretics and say He isn't? Nobody's going to do that, you see. Jesus is fully God. **Then someone is pictured in between only because we're so scared. And that's clearly delineated in Exodus when God came down to speak to the people. And they were terrified and said, "Don't let God speak to us, lest we die."** See, they didn't want to speak to Him—but He wanted to speak to them. So they said to Moses, "You seem to have some special relationship with God. You speak to God, let Him speak to you, then you speak to us." They begged for an intercessor and a mediator. God says, "I'd like to talk to you as I talk to my friend Moses." Turn to Numbers, and God says to Miriam and Aaron, "How can you be so disrespectful of Moses, when He is such a close friend of mine? I speak to prophets in visions and dreams, but not to my friend Moses. I talk to him face to face as a man speaks to his friend." And there's a key word in there. I talk to him plainly and clearly. And the disciples in John 16 in the upper room should have remembered that when Jesus said, "From now on I want to talk to you plainly and clearly about my Father. There is no need for me to plead to the Father for you, for the Father loves you Himself."

And two chapters back He'd said, "I don't want to call you servants any more, I want to call you my friends." Friends? You don't have mediators between friends, you have mediators between enemies. See, God has been trying to say all along, "Look. This need for someone in between? I don't need it, you do." And God has not succeeded until that has been eliminated. And you say, "Well now, you mean it's really safe to appear in your presence without a mediator; without an intercessor?" And He'll say, "Well, who do you think you've been speaking to all along, anyway?" "Well," we say, "that kind one in between, you know, who learned how to be a merciful and faithful high priest. We like that buffer in between." God says, "Do you know who that buffer is? He happens to be your Creator." God is the mediator. God is the intercessor.

Well, if God is the intercessor, who needs to intercede with Him? I mean, when you stop to think of it, and our human reason has not been destroyed by this hellish view I mentioned a while ago, then just on the basis of logic alone, as in the upper room, Jesus says, "Look. I am God?"

"Yes."

"You've been talking to me for three and a half years?"

"Yes."

"I washed Judas' feet, and yours, Peter, sinner that you are? And there was nobody in between. Do you realize what this means?"

"No."

"Well, let me tell you plainly about the Father," He says. "There is no need for me to intercede with the Father for you, for the Father loves you Himself."

And they said, "Now you're talking plainly, but could we return to the subject we were discussing a while ago? When you set up your kingdom, what positions will we hold?"

That's what they were preoccupied with. Even as He was preparing to wash their feet, they were arguing about the positions they would hold in the kingdom. That was the big thing.

"After the meeting in New Orleans, am I going to be vice president?" Can you see Mrs. Wilson coming with Neil, "Please may my son be General Conference president?" I mean, that's what the disciples were doing. How do you talk to them as to adults? He had a hard time doing it.

And to this very day, a person will say, "I feel more at home with all those emergency measures. I feel much safer with somebody merciful and friendly in between." You mean you don't like that beautiful statement or two or three in John? Why would you take the other?

"Well there's so much of it." Yes, but these are labeled "plain." "Who says they're plain?" Jesus says they're plain. It seems to me, I would weigh those statements as outweighing everything else in all of Scripture. But you don't do away with the rest. He's the one who gave all the emergency measures, because we needed them. We were scared of God; He said, "I'll give you

an intermediary.” And He comes as the intermediary Himself. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April, 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

A little girl once asked me, . . . “Will you please ask the minister to speak easy words that we can understand? Will you please tell him that we do not understand large words, like ‘justification’ and ‘sanctification’? We do not know what these words mean.” {CT 254.2}

The little girl’s complaint contains a lesson worthy of consideration by teachers and ministers. Are there not many who would do well to heed the request, “Speak easy words, that we may know what you mean”? {CT 254.3}

Make your explanations clear, for I know that there are many who do not understand many of the things said to them. Let the Holy Spirit mold and fashion your speech, cleansing it from all dross. Speak as little children, remembering that there are many well advanced in years who are but little children in understanding. {CT 254.4}

The teachings of Christ were marked with a simplicity, dignity, and power heretofore unknown to them, and their involuntary exclamation was: “Never man spake like this Man.” {5T 746.3}

His lessons were impressive, beautiful and weighty with importance, and yet so simple that a child could understand them. {SD 266.2}

Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest the nature of His law, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness. {Ed 76.2}

That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ’s teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar. {COL 17.1}

Not only the things of nature, but the sacrificial service and the Scriptures themselves—all given to reveal God—were so perverted that they became the means of concealing Him. {COL 18.2}

Christ did not deal in abstract theories, but in that which is essential to the development of character, that which will enlarge man’s capacity for knowing God, and increase his efficiency to

do good. He spoke to men of those truths that relate to the conduct of life, and that take hold upon eternity. {COL 23.1}

Christ came to demonstrate the value of the divine principles by revealing their power for the regeneration of humanity. He came to teach how these principles are to be developed and applied. {Ed 77.1}

Instead of directing the people to study men's theories about God, His word, or His works, He taught them to behold Him, as manifested in His works, in His word, and by His providences. He brought their minds in contact with the mind of the Infinite. {Ed 81.2}

The people "were astonished at His teaching (R.V.), for His word was with power." Luke 4:32. Never before spoke one who had such power to awaken thought, to kindle aspiration, to arouse every capability of body, mind, and soul. {Ed 81.3}

Christ's teaching, like His sympathies, embraced the world. Never can there be a circumstance of life, a crisis in human experience, which has not been anticipated in His teaching, and for which its principles have not a lesson. The Prince of teachers, His words will be found a guide to His co-workers till the end of time. {Ed 81.4}

To Him nothing was without purpose. The sports of the child, the toils of the man, life's pleasures and cares and pains, all were means to the end—the revelation of God for the uplifting of humanity. {Ed 82.5}

The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished. {MH 143.2}

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." {MH 143.3}

Christ loved to gather the people about Him under the blue heavens, on some grassy hillside, or on the beach beside the lake. Here, surrounded by the works of His own creation, He could turn their thoughts from the artificial to the natural. In the growth and development of nature were revealed the principles of His kingdom. As men should lift their eyes to the hills of God and behold the wonderful works of His hand, they could learn precious lessons of divine truth. In future days the lessons of the divine Teacher would thus be repeated to them by the things of nature. The mind would be uplifted and the heart would find rest. {MH 54.1}

The prince of teachers, He sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations. He presented the truth in such a way that ever after it was to His hearers intertwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies. He taught in a way that made them feel the completeness of His identification with their interests and happiness. His



instruction was so direct, His illustrations were so appropriate, His words so sympathetic and cheerful, that His hearers were charmed. The simplicity and earnestness with which He addressed the needy, hallowed every word. {MH 23.1}

Jesus taught by illustrations and parables drawn from nature and from the familiar events of everyday life. . . . In this way He associated natural things with spiritual, linking the things of nature and the life experience of His hearers with the sublime truths of the written word. And whenever afterward their eyes rested on the objects with which He has associated eternal truth, His lessons were repeated. {CT 140.1}