

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2014: *Discipleship*

Lesson 6 “Discipling the ‘Ordinary’”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 2:21–28; Matt. 15:32–39; Matt. 16:13–17; Luke 12:6, 7; 13:1–5; James 2:1–9.

Memory Text

“Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, ‘Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.’ And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him” (Mark 1:16–18).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Humble Beginnings
- III. Transforming the “Common”
- IV. A Flawed Fisherman’s Calling
- V. Heavenly Evaluation
- VI. A Classless Society
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “Jesus saw the meaninglessness and emptiness of worldly greatness and honor. In fact, in many cases, it was the most “successful” people—the favorably positioned Pharisees, the wealthy Sadducees, and the Roman aristocracy—who troubled Him the most. In contrast, the “ordinary” people—carpenters, fishermen, farmers, housewives, shepherds, soldiers, and servants—generally thronged and embraced Him.” (Sabbath afternoon) Why is it that “ordinary” people tend to embrace the message of Jesus more readily than the “successful” people (see also 1 Corinthians 1:26-29)?
2. Sunday’s lesson deals with Jesus’ “humble beginnings”. Why was Jesus born in this manner and into this social class? What are the implications for our understanding of God’s character?
3. Monday’s lesson uses the wedding in Cana and the feeding of the 4000 as examples of transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. “Whether Jesus was changing

- water into unfermented wine from the fruit of the vine, or turning fishermen into preachers (*Mark 1:16–18*), He specialized in transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. Onlookers frequently questioned Jesus' personal credentials (*Mark 6:3*). They questioned the absence of ostentation. Because they longed for the extraordinary, they overlooked that which they considered to be ordinary and did so at what was potentially an eternal loss." (Monday's lesson) What is the significance of this? How is it connected with the Biblical storyline? How do these two stories function in the context of John and Matthew?
4. Tuesday's lesson concentrates on Peter and the change of his character. "Though only an 'ordinary' fisherman with plenty of faults, through his time with Jesus, Peter was radically converted—even after making some grievous errors, including denying Jesus three times, just as Jesus told him he would. Though many points emerge from the story of Peter, the moment he first caught a glimpse of who Jesus was, he was aware of his own faults and admitted them. Hence, through patience and forbearance, Jesus was able to turn Peter's flawed character into someone who helped change to history." (Tuesday's lesson) What are the implications for us? Why are we so reluctant to bring back or to restore those who have public failures in their lives (marriage; ministry, etc.)? Where is the line between putting people into a vulnerable position, and trusting the change process that God accomplishes in people's lives?
 5. "The Cross proves, in ways that we cannot begin to fathom, the 'infinite worth' (to borrow a phrase from Ellen G. White) of every human being, regardless of his or her status in life—a status that is often nothing more than a human concoction based on concepts and attributes that are meaningless in heaven, or even contrary to the very principles of heaven itself." (Wednesday's lesson) How can we get a glimpse of our own value, and the value of others? What are the implications for our self-esteem and for our ministry to others?
 6. "Perhaps the most socially attractive feature of primitive Christianity was the absence of class distinctions. Dividing walls had crumbled beneath the gospel's weight. The common person triumphed through Christ. Christ transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary. Carpenters, tax collectors, stonecutters, queens, domestic servants, priests, Greeks, Romans, men, women, wealthy, and the destitute all became equals within Christ's kingdom of grace. In reality, the Christian community was to be a 'classless society.'" (Thursday's lesson) What was it about the early church that made them so attractive to the surrounding society? What can we learn from that for our community today?
 7. On the other hand, the primitive "communism" of the early church failed and proved to be unworkable in the society with pervasive sinfulness. How can the church minister to those in need, and yet help people escape the "learned helplessness" and not be naïve about its approach to society?

8. “We need to ask ourselves, How well do we, individually and collectively, apply these principles to the ways in which we minister to the world? What kind of things hold us back from doing better in this important area?” (Thursday’s lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Simon, a wealthy man whom Jesus had cured of leprosy, invited Jesus and other friends to eat with him at his house. Three of Jesus’ closest friends were also there: Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. Now Mary is described by Luke as “a woman who was living an immoral life in the town” (Luke 7:37, NEB).

While they were all reclining at the table, Mary brought a flask of very costly perfume and anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair. Simon watched with disapproval and thought to himself, “If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she lives!”

“Jesus spoke up and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to tell you.’”

“‘Yes, Teacher,’ he said, ‘tell me’” (Luke 7:39, 40, GNT).

Jesus then told a story of two debtors who both had been forgiven. And as he told it, Simon realized that Jesus had read his thoughts. He began to see himself as a worse sinner than the woman he had despised, and he wondered if Jesus might go on and expose him before his guests.

Nothing was more offensive to the Lord than self-righteous accusation. But did he expose Simon? Did he say to the company, “Let me tell you about our host”?

Instead, the Lord as always did the gracious thing. He courteously accepted Mary’s impulsive act. And with equal grace he corrected Simon without humiliating him before his friends. Simon must have been deeply touched!

When Jesus met the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, he did not humiliate or condemn him for having squandered his health in youthful indulgence. He simply asked him kindly, “Would you like to be well? Then pick up your mat and go home.” Later Jesus met him and said, “You know what caused your trouble. Go and sin no more, lest something worse happen to you” (see John 5:1–15).

Picture Christ in the upper room the night before he was crucified. The twelve disciples were squabbling like children as to “which one of them should be thought of as the greatest” (Luke 22:24, GNT).

Did Jesus chide them for their folly or scold them for their unwillingness to wash each other’s feet? Instead, he quietly arose, took a towel and a basin of water, and the universe watched as

the Great Creator knelt down and washed a dozen pairs of dirty feet. He even washed the feet of his betrayer, Judas.

What fools the disciples were that night to miss a last chance to ask Jesus why he looked so troubled and what he meant when he said, "I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in my Father's Kingdom" (Matthew 26:29, GNT)!

What a chance the disciples missed to wash the feet of the Son of God the night before he died! If only one of them had volunteered, what a memory he would have cherished for the rest of eternity!

Imagine the effect on the disciples as each in turn looked down on the head of Jesus bent over the basin and felt those strong carpenter's hands washing his feet.

Jesus could have looked up at them and said, "You don't believe my Father would be willing to do this, do you? But if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. The Father loves you just as much as I do. If you are comfortable with me, you will be comfortable with him."

Later he told them that one of them would betray him. But he didn't expose him to the whole group. And when he told Judas to go and do quickly the terrible thing he had to do, the other disciples thought he had been sent out for provisions or even to perform such a noble act as to make an offering for the poor.

Why didn't Jesus expose his betrayer before the others? Surely he deserved to be exposed. Think what it says about God that Jesus did not humiliate such a traitor!

Still later that night, out in Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James, and John still deeper into the Garden and there began his awesome experience of separation from his Father. Three times he came over to where the disciples were dozing, hoping for some companionship and comfort in his agony.

What a chance the disciples missed to encourage the Son of God! What if the three of them had arisen and gone back with Jesus and knelt down around him as he prayed? What a memory those three men would have had! But they slept through it all. And Jesus did not reprove them. He sympathized with them for being too tired to help.

A few hours later Peter was cursing and swearing in the courtyard to prove he was not a Christian. He did not even know this Christ!

Then the cock crowed, just as Jesus had said the night before—right after Peter's bold speech that, though others might let him down, he would give his life for the Lord.

When Peter heard that sound, he looked to see if Jesus had noticed. Though he was on trial for his life and had suffered so much already, Jesus was more concerned about his erring disciple out there in the courtyard. He turned and looked straight at Peter.

As Peter knew God up to that time, he may well have expected to see wrath and indignation in the face of Christ. He surely deserved it! But instead he saw sorrow, disappointment, and pity—the face of the one who just the night before had knelt down and washed his dirty feet.

Peter went out and wept bitterly, so ashamed he was and so moved by the look he saw on Jesus' face (Luke 22:54–62).

A little later Judas came into the court, threw down the thirty pieces of silver, and confessed that he had betrayed innocent blood. Then he, too, looked at Jesus. He saw the same sorrow and pity that had touched Peter's heart—the face of the one who just the night before had knelt down and washed his dirty feet. Overcome, Judas went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3–5).

If only Judas had responded as Peter did to that look on Jesus' face! What a scene for all heaven to watch, if Judas had found where Peter was weeping and the two disciples had knelt down together and become new men!

Imagine how Peter felt all that Sabbath. What a fool he had made of himself the past twenty-four hours! Twice he had spoken so impetuously in the upper room. Twice he had disgraced himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. And then the cowardice and disloyalty while his Lord was being tried! Now Jesus was dead, and there was no chance for him to make things right.

No wonder he rushed to the tomb on Sunday morning when he heard the news that the grave was empty!

But it was Mary who had the privilege of seeing Christ first and carrying the good news to the other disciples. Mary, of all people! The woman who had so many problems and so many weaknesses, the one out of whom Jesus had to cast seven devils (see Luke 8:2). Yet it was Mary who was picked for this high privilege. Think what it says about God that Mary should be the one so highly honored.

When Mary recognized Jesus standing outside the tomb, she fell at his feet to worship him. And Jesus gently said, "Do not detain me now, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go and tell my brothers that I am going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (see John 20:17).

Listen to Jesus calling the disciples his brothers—the men who had let him down when he needed them the most!

When the angels confirmed Jesus' command to Mary to take the news to the disciples, they said, "Tell the disciples, and especially tell Peter, that Jesus has risen and will meet them in Galilee" (see Mark 16:7).

How Godlike it was of the angels to add, “and especially tell Peter”! The angels admire and worship God for the way he has treated sinners. How much they must have enjoyed adding, “Tell Peter”!

This is the kind of God with whom we may spend eternity. That is why, even though we all have sinned, we shall be comfortable in the presence of the one who knows us so well.

We have nothing to fear from the infinite memory of God. God is forgiveness personified. And he has promised not only to forgive us but to treat us as if we had never sinned. He will cast all our sins behind his back (Isaiah 38:17). He will “send them to the bottom of the sea!” (Micah 7:19; GNT).

There is no pretense or forgetfulness in this. God knows how we have lived. We know what sinners we have been. Angels have watched our every deed. But in spite of all this, our heavenly Father will treat us with dignity and respect as if we had always been his loyal children.

As God treats us, so we shall treat each other. This is why David will be comfortable there, in spite of his great sin. It is not because all memory of sin has been blotted out. This would require that every Bible be destroyed and all memory of what it contains. Gone would be all memory of the plan of salvation and God’s merciful handling of the problem of sin!

The sins of David have been immortalized on the pages of Scripture. Rahab’s former profession has been described there. So have the sins of Samson, Gideon, Moses, Jacob, and Abraham. Hebrews 11 indicates that they too will be in the kingdom. And they too will be comfortable there.

When Paul included a long list of sins at the end of Romans 1, he put gossiping right in the middle. No one will be admitted to heaven who cannot be entrusted with the knowledge of other people’s sins and who will not wholeheartedly treat former sinners with full dignity and respect.

This is how it will be possible for David and Uriah to meet and not come to blows. Some day it may be our privilege to see those two men meet again for the first time in the hereafter. Think how David stole Uriah’s wife and then arranged for the murder of the faithful soldier who had helped him become king (see 2 Samuel 11, 12; 1 Chronicles 11:10, 41)! Will the past be all forgotten?

Will Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, David’s son, have forgotten she once was Uriah’s wife? Will the prophet Nathan have forgotten his moving appeal to the king? Will David have forgotten his confession in the fifty-first Psalm? Will we have forgotten David’s prayer for a new heart that has helped many of us pray the same prayer?

Or will it be possible for David and Uriah to approach each other, look into each other's eyes, remember, and once more become friends? To me that would be far more wonderful!

Could we begin to treat each other this way here and now in this life? It is surely not natural to do so. It would be a great miracle of healing, like the miracle that happened to John. At first, Jesus called him Son of Thunder. But later John became "the beloved disciple" and wrote in his Gospel and Epistles so much about Christian love.

John watched the way Jesus received sinners, how he treated everyone with dignity and grace. Never had John seen such strength of character, and yet such tenderness; such fearless denunciation of sin, and yet such patience and sympathy. As he was moved to ever deeper admiration, John became more and more like the One he worshiped and admired. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, pp. 89-95. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002} <http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-09>

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ came to preach the gospel to the poor. He reached the people where they were. He brought plain, simple truth to their comprehension. How simple his language! Even the poorest, the unlearned and ignorant, could understand him. Not one needed go to a dictionary to obtain the meaning of the high-sounding titles or words that fell from the lips of the greatest Teacher the world ever knew. While the priests, the rulers, and the expounders of the law were considering themselves as the only teachers of the people, he told these learned rabbis that they were both ignorant of the Scriptures and of the power of God. {RH, July 19, 1887 par. 13}

He dined and lodged with the rich and the poor, and made Himself familiar with the interests and occupations of men, that He might gain access to their hearts. The learned and the most intellectual were gratified and charmed with His discourses, and yet they were so plain and simple as to be comprehended by the humblest minds. {3T 214.2}

Christ reached the people where they were. He presented the plain truth to their minds in the most forcible and simple language. The humble poor, the most unlearned, could comprehend, through faith in him, the most exalted truths of God. No one needed to consult the learned doctors as to his meaning. He did not perplex the ignorant with mysterious inferences, or use unaccustomed and learned words, of which they had no knowledge. The greatest teacher the world has ever known, was the most definite, simple, and practical in his instruction. {RH, April 17, 1888 par. 7}

So wide was Christ's view of truth, so extended His teaching, that every phase of nature was employed in illustrating truth. The scenes upon which the eye daily rests were all connected with some spiritual truth, so that nature is clothed with the parables of the Master. {COL 20.1}

Christ's manner of teaching was beautiful and attractive, and it was ever characterized by simplicity. He unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through the use of figures and symbols with which His hearers were familiar; and the common people heard Him gladly, for they could comprehend His words. There were no high-sounding words used, to understand which it was necessary to consult a dictionary. {CT 240.2}

Jesus, the heavenly Teacher, did not hold Himself aloof from the children of men; but in order to benefit them He came from heaven to earth, where they were, that the purity and holiness of His life might shine upon the pathway of all and light the way to heaven. The Redeemer of the world sought to make His lessons of instruction plain and simple, that all might comprehend them. {2T 579.2}

The Saviour's entire life was characterized by disinterested benevolence and the beauty of holiness. He is our pattern of goodness. From the beginning of His ministry, men began to comprehend more clearly the character of God. He carried out His teachings in His own life. He showed consistency without obstinacy, benevolence without weakness, tenderness and sympathy without sentimentalism. He was highly social, yet He possessed a reserve that discouraged any familiarity. His temperance never led to bigotry or austerity. He was not conformed to the world, yet He was attentive to the wants of the least among men. {CT 262.1}