

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2014: *Discipleship*
Lesson 7 “Jesus and the Social Outcasts”

Read for this week’s study

Matt. 21:28–32; John 8:1–11; Mark 5:1–20; John 4:5–32; Matt. 9:9–13.

Memory Text

“The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ‘Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’ ” (John 4:28–30, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Bottom Dwellers
- III. “In the Very Act”
- IV. The Lowest of the Low
- V. The Woman at the Well
- VI. Publicans and Sinners
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “Societies establish hierarchies. Wealthy or well-educated people usually acquire the highest positions. Good moral citizens, the ‘ordinary’ people, normally occupy the middle rungs on the social ladder. That leaves the bottom dwellers, those such as prostitutes, substance abusers, criminals, the homeless, and others. During Christ’s time, that list also included lepers and tax collectors.” (Sunday lesson) How was society divided in the time of Jesus? What has changed since then? What are the implications of this for our self-perception and for our ministry to others?
2. “Although hardened by sinful pleasures, and sometimes encased in self-constructed tough exteriors, the social outcasts were still easier to reach than were the prideful, haughty, and self-righteous elite.” (Sunday’s lesson) What are the implications for us and for our contemporary world? Are these implications also true when we look at differences between the First and Third World, or between different classes in one society? Where has the Seventh-day Adventist Church traditionally been most successful? Since we maintain that we have a message for “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people”, what can be done to truly reach everyone?

3. Monday's lesson deals with the woman caught "in the very act". What can we learn from how Jesus dealt with her, and how does that impact our understanding of sin, religion, and hypocrisy? How does it impact our dealings with guilty people today?
4. "Read Mark 5:1–20. Compare this man's situation with the plight of modern homeless people. Compare his description with that of mentally ill patients. What similarities and differences exist? How does modern society treat people who suffer from mental illness? (...) A crucial point for us in this story is that no one, no matter how deranged—whether from demon possession, mental illness, drug use, whatever—is to be ignored." (Tuesday's lesson) What is Mark trying to convey to his audience in this section of his gospel (see 4:35)?
5. "What social conventions did Jesus break in his conversation with the woman at the well (John 4:5-32) and why? What should this tell us about 'social conventions' and the way in which they should be regarded when they interfere with witnessing? What social conventions might be hindering your witness to others?" (Wednesday's lesson) How do you determine what lesson the Biblical story is trying to teach? And what about those instances when Jesus respected the social conventions?
6. "In what way did Jesus confront the woman about her sinful life? What lessons could we take from His approach?" (Wednesday's lesson) To what extent are we expected to confront people about sin in their life? And what is the interplay between my responsibility and the work of the Holy Spirit whose job it is to convict of sin (John 16:8)? How is "confronting" people related to our spiritual gifts?
7. "Though obviously impressed by the fact that Jesus knew that she had been sexually promiscuous, what did the woman say in her witness that showed that she still had some questions about who Jesus was? What lessons can we draw from this about our own need for patience when it comes to the making of disciples?" (Wednesday's lesson) Was the Samaritan woman expressing her lingering questions, or was she expressing incredible tact in dealing with pious people for whom she was no spiritual authority? Isn't the story of Nicodemus (John 3) a much better example if we want to find an example for patience in the making of disciples?
8. What is going on in Matthew 9:9-13? (Thursday's lesson) What can we learn from it? "In what way is the essence of true Christianity revealed here, not just in what Jesus said but in that which He did? Especially given the context, why must we be so careful that we do not become guilty of possessing the attitude that Jesus is so powerfully condemning here—especially when we are all to some degree creatures of our particular societies, and thus influenced by the prejudices and social barriers that are inherent in every society?" (Thursday's lesson) Is it possible for us to be "Pharisees" today who feel that if God wanted to reveal Himself to others He would have to do it through us? Are we willing to learn lessons wherever God wants to teach us?
9. "It's hardly feasible that before Christ returns these boundaries are going to vanish. On the contrary, as our world gets worse, there is no doubt that these barriers will, as well. As Christians, however, we must do what we can in every way possible to

seek to transcend these barriers that have caused so much heartache and suffering and pain in our world, especially to those whom society rejects as the greatest outcasts.” (Thursday’s lesson) When God called Israel from Egypt He wanted them to become an “anti-kingdom”, a different kind of society than what Egypt was offering. How much is that true for Christ’s community of believers in the New Testament era?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

They sought to trap Him on divorce. Remember, we looked that up. Now they are seeking to trap Him on the one sin most saints agree upon. You can do so many other things in the church, but do this, you’re out. This we’re clear on. So they took a sin that has always seemed to be a clear one, so there would be no question. They also assembled a large crowd. They also made sure she was caught in the very act, although they cheated here. They didn’t bring the man. And how could they catch her in the very act without the man being involved? That would be very difficult to do. So they were already cheating, and violating the Old Testament rules, by bringing just the woman. And they put her in front, and said, “You know the Scriptures. Are You going to violate them again? If so, we’d like for You to do it in public. Is this sinful woman to be stoned, or not?”

What do you think of Jesus’ reply as a revelation of the truth about God? You remember, He leaned over and began writing in the dust. The tradition is that it’s their sins. Now, there’s nothing that says it’s their sins. Ellen White endorses the tradition. But the fact that the oldest to the youngest looked at what He’d written and then left, suggests that it was something that spoke to them, and they left. So I’ll accept the sins. When they realized what He was writing down there, they realized that He could expose them at any minute. And these were the religious leaders, the defenders of the faith, the trusted ones. And they must have wondered if at any moment He was going to arise and say, “Gather a little closer, all of you. Let Me tell you about this group of pious frauds, here, who have brought this poor woman. They even arranged for her to be caught in the very act.”

So these priests, who brought this woman, God didn’t want to embarrass them. Maybe He’d win one. And then He turns to Mary and says, “Where are your accusers?” And she wasn’t noticing what was going on. She was waiting for the stones to arrive, as Achan did. And she looked up and said, “They’re gone. No one accuses me.” And though she’d committed adultery, Jesus said, “I don’t condemn you, either. You go home and be a better girl from now on.” And Ellen White loves to add that from then on, Mary became one of Christ’s firmest friends. The way He treated her, with incredible dignity and respect under those circumstances. She had given up, and she had no respect for herself. She knew she had been caught in the very act. She didn’t have a chance. And yet He treated her this way. Now, what do you think that says about God? The worst of all sins, as we list them, you know. Look how He treated her? Is He in favor

of adultery? Oh, look what He's written on that subject. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – John, recorded April, 1982 Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/57MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/58MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. How extraordinary! What a risk to His reputation! And He suffered because of it, didn't He? They said He was a winebibber, and He associated with these immoral people. How are you going to help people if you don't meet them where they are? Which He has always done. And it's very dangerous to do that. That is, harsh critics will misunderstand. But we admire it, don't we. How marvelous that He was willing to go out and eat with these people who were regarded as the dregs of society, even stopping under the tree and saying, "Zacchaeus, I want to have dinner with you today."

Can you imagine, though, the Lord turning up at your front door and saying, "Could I have dinner with you today?" What would you say? Zacchaeus was overcome, wasn't he? He came down out of that tree, and he promised, not just restitution. He said, "I will give four times as much." He was really overwhelmed. He never got over it. And that was a very wonderful occasion. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark, recorded April, 1982 Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Think how Jesus treated the women. And He stunned the observers by treating them so. Even a Samaritan woman? You remember, the disciples were surprised; 1, that He was talking to a Samaritan, but 2, that He was talking to a woman. You don't do that. But He did. He spoke to her very kindly, even though He knew what she had been doing. His treatment of the woman taken in adultery. Think how He sought to recover her dignity and self-respect. The way He treated Mary, who was known as a wicked woman in the town, so that she too might recover dignity and self-respect. How graciously He treated women. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 - Proverbs, recorded January, 1982, Riverside, California}

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

<http://pkp.cc/29MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/30MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Christ lived and died to set us free. Or rather, Christ lived and died as He did because God created us free, because God will never force us to do His will. Instead, He sacrificed Himself in His Son to win us, to persuade us on the basis of evidence and truth to trust Him enough to listen and to do things His way.

It is especially this truth about God, His way of governing the universe, and His treatment of those who have rebelled against Him, that sets us free in the broadest sense.

Think how so many have regarded God as a harsh, vindictive tyrant, waiting to punish and destroy those who do not obey His laws. Some have even sacrificed their own children to appease their angry god. Surely such people are not free but in fearful bondage to Satan's lies about God.

Think of those who punish themselves for sin or who always feel under God's condemnation. The truth is that God is glad to forgive. 1 John 1:9. He loves sinners (John 3:16) and does not condemn the repentant. Romans 8:1.

But it has been Satan's studied purpose all these years to rob people of their freedom by hiding the truth about God.

Even the twelve disciples believed some of Satan's theological falsehoods. One day Jesus met a man blind from birth. The disciples asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" John 9:2, RSV. They thought God treated men this way.

On another occasion, when some Samaritan villagers would not receive Jesus, James and John asked, "Lord, may we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?" Luke 9:54, NEB.

It took the disciples a long time to learn the truth about God. Eventually eleven of them did, and it set them free to become men who could change the world.

Peter finally learned in the courtyard during Jesus' trial. He had just denied three times that he even knew Christ, and he had cursed and sworn to prove it. Then the cock crowed—just as Jesus had predicted in the upper room. Stung with guilt and remorse, Peter looked to see if Jesus had noticed.

Indeed He had! Though He was on trial for His own life, and had been beaten and insulted by the cruel mob, Jesus was more concerned about His erring disciple. "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Luke 22:61, NEB.

As Peter understood God so far, he expected to see in the Lord's face an expression of anger, reproof, and offended justice. Instead he saw only pity and loving disappointment the face of the One who just the evening before had knelt down and washed his dirty feet.

"Peter went out, and wept bitterly." Luke 22:62. But at last the truth had dawned on him that this was the kind of Person God really is. This is the way God feels about ungrateful sinners. And Peter was set free that night to become a new man. {Maxwell, Graham. *I Want to Be Free*, pp. 7-9. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

Further Study with Ellen White

It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His life for me. Nothing so dispels doubt as coming in contact with the character of Christ. He declares, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out;" that is, there is no possibility of My casting him out, for I have pledged My word to receive him. Take Christ at His word, and let your lips declare that you have gained the victory. {TM 517.2}

God places no value on outward display or boasting. Many who in this life are looked upon as superior to others, will one day see that God values men according to their compassion and self-denial. . . . Those who follow the example of Him who went about doing good, who help and bless their fellow men, trying always to lift them up, are in God's sight infinitely higher than the selfish ones who exalt themselves. {AG 67.4}

Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly entangled in the snares of the enemy. {MH 89.3}

The encounter with the demoniacs of Gergesa had a lesson for the disciples. It showed the depths of degradation to which Satan is seeking to drag the whole human race, and the mission of Christ to set men free from his power. Those wretched beings, dwelling in the place of graves, possessed by demons, in bondage to uncontrolled passions and loathsome lusts, represent what humanity would become if given up to satanic jurisdiction. Satan's influence is constantly exerted upon men to distract the senses, control the mind for evil, and incite to violence and crime. He weakens the body, darkens the intellect, and debases the soul. Whenever men reject the Saviour's invitation, they are yielding themselves to Satan. {DA 341.1}

And souls that have been degraded into instruments of Satan are still through the power of Christ transformed into messengers of righteousness, and sent forth by the Son of God to tell what "great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." {DA 341.2}

When Jesus sat down to rest at Jacob's well, He had come from Judea, where His ministry had produced little fruit. He had been rejected by the priests and rabbis, and even the people who professed to be His disciples had failed of perceiving His divine character. He was faint and weary; yet He did not neglect the opportunity of speaking to one woman, though she was a stranger, an alien from Israel, and living in open sin. {DA 194.3}

The Saviour did not wait for congregations to assemble. Often He began His lessons with only a few gathered about Him, but one by one the passers-by paused to listen, until a multitude heard with wonder and awe the words of God through the heaven-sent Teacher. The worker for Christ should not feel that he cannot speak with the same earnestness to a few hearers as to a larger company. There may be only one to hear the message; but who can tell how far-

reaching will be its influence? It seemed a small matter, even to His disciples, for the Saviour to spend His time upon a woman of Samaria. But He reasoned more earnestly and eloquently with her than with kings, councilors, or high priests. The lessons He gave to that woman have been repeated to the earth's remotest bounds. {DA 194.4}

As soon as she had found the Saviour the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised, a whole cityful were brought to hear the Saviour. She carried the light at once to her countrymen. {DA 195.1}

Jesus longed to unfold the deep mysteries of the truth which had been hid for ages, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews, and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 3:6. This truth the disciples were slow to learn, and the divine Teacher gave them lesson upon lesson. In rewarding the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar, He had already given evidence that He did not share the intolerance of the Jews. But the Samaritans had some knowledge of God; and the centurion had shown kindness to Israel. Now Jesus brought the disciples in contact with a heathen, whom they regarded as having no reason above any of her people, to expect favor from Him. He would give an example of how such a one should be treated. The disciples had thought that He dispensed too freely the gifts of His grace. He would show that His love was not to be circumscribed to race or nation. {DA 402.2}

This is ever the way that the work of God has made progress on the earth. Let your light shine, and other lights will be kindled. {GW 195.3}

Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. He reveals to them the Father, and the service acceptable to Him who reads the heart. For such He uses no parables. To them, as to the woman at the well, He says, "I that speak unto thee am He." {MH 28.2}

The Pharisees beheld Christ sitting and eating with publicans and sinners. . . . These self-righteous men, who felt no need of help, could not appreciate the work of Christ. They placed themselves where they could not accept the salvation which He came to bring. They would not come unto Him that they might have life. The poor publicans and sinners felt their need of help, and they accepted the instruction and aid which they knew Christ was able to give them. {CC 284.5}