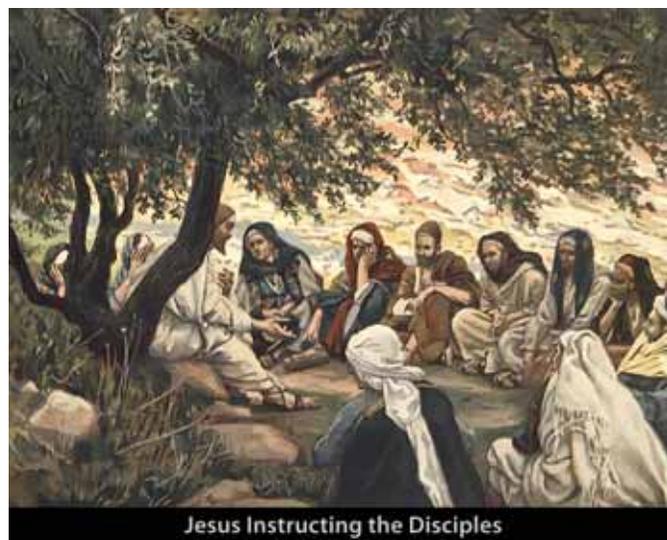


Discipleship Training - Part 2

The Bible describes Christians using the following words: sun, stars, lights, Mount Zion, Lebanon, treasure, jewels, gold, vessels of gold and silver, stones of a crown, lively stones, babes, little children, obedient children, members of a body, soldiers, runners in a race, wrestlers, good servants, strangers and pilgrims, sheep, lambs, calves of the stallions, eagles, doves, thirsty deer, good fish, dew and showers, watered gardens, unfailing springs, vines, branches of the vine, pomegranates, good figs, lilies, willows by the water-courses, trees planted by rivers, cedars in Lebanon, palm-trees, corn, wheat, salt, overcomers, children of God, those with white robes, brethren, and saints. These are not words that the world is using to describe Christians these days. Jesus warned us that such would occur. Just as angels rejoice when a person is saved, we have been told to rejoice when we suffer for Him! Suffering is part of this life for the Christian who is committed to following Jesus. That was the message that Jesus sent to His disciples before He sent them out on their first mission.

BACKGROUND. In our last study, Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs to minister in the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea. They were to heal people and preach about the kingdom of God. They were to go with minimal supplies and depend upon God to meet their needs. I have wondered how Jesus would react to those today who do not want to minister for Him unless they are able to have at least a middle class income. Jesus and the disciples were not wealthy. Jesus' disciples did not take very much with them. One would think that if they had little, surely God would have blessed them and their ministry by giving them a great response. Jesus also warned them that their message would be rejected and that they would be persecuted and insulted. It is difficult sometimes when strangers reject the good news about Jesus; but when family members reject us, that is even worse. Yet Jesus warned His disciples that even family members would reject them. Under circumstances like that, who would want to follow Jesus? Yet, the disciples did. That is a mark of a true disciple.



Yet, Jesus was not encouraging them to seek persecution or to remain if they encountered any. They were told to flee or escape if persecution occurred. Jesus encouraged them to flee, if possible. That was clear. There is no virtue in suffering for Jesus when one can escape it. It is stupid to remain and intentionally suffer.

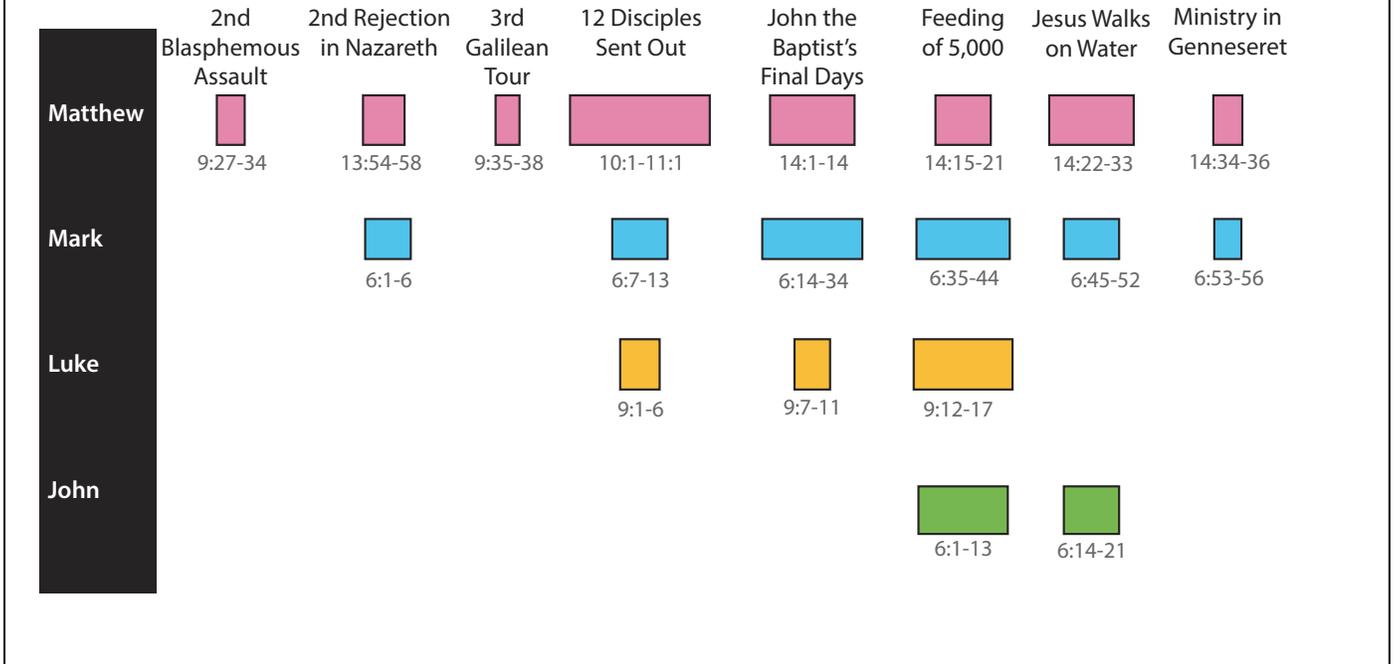
NOT ABOVE THE TEACHER. This study is a continuation of the last one. This is part two. Having warned them that persecution would come, Jesus now tells them that they should always expect to suffer for Him. Why would they think otherwise? Listen to Jesus,

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign the members of his household! (NASB) Matt. 10:24-25

Jesus' illustration is simple. It

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is about one person who has a lesser position than another person such as the disciple and teacher relationship. The disciple or learner does not know more than the teacher. It is in that sense that one is in a lesser position. One knows less and the other knows more. We all understand that the disciple is not above the teacher in that sense. In the teaching process, the goal of the disciple or student is to learn what the teacher knows. That is, it is “enough” for the disciple or student to become like the teacher. The Greek word that Jesus uses for “enough” is ARKETOS. It means “sufficient” or “satisfaction.” That is, it is sufficient when the disciple knows what the teacher knows. That is the goal of education.

Then Jesus added, “If they called Me a devil, why not you?” Since the disciple is not above the teacher, why should the disciple expect to be treated better? One would expect that the teacher would receive honors and recognition for his knowledge and what he advocates but not the student. So if the teacher is maligned, insulted, and called a devil, why should the student expect to be treated better? The answer is obvious. The disciple should not expect better treatment.

Even though Christians are called many beautiful names

in the scriptures, a true disciple will suffer in this life when he or she follows God. One sign or indicator that people are following God is that they will suffer. Many in the world do not consider Christians to be beautiful. Instead the world views us as problems. The same was true of Jesus and His disciples.

How did the disciples respond to Jesus’ words? It appears that they responded with fear since Jesus encouraged them not to be fearful. It is possible that Jesus just anticipated the obvious response. But if I had been there and listening, I believe that I would have been very concerned and apprehensive. So Jesus said,

Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. (NASB)

Matt. 10:26

Jesus will repeat “do not fear” again in verses 28 and 31. He encouraged them not to fear criticism and false accusations. The Pharisees had already slandered Him and committed the unpardonable sin by declaring that Jesus’ miracles, signs,

and wonders were performed by demonic power. They had called Jesus a devil. Believers should not fear the false accusations, because the truth will eventually be revealed. The motives and lies of their accusers will become known eventually.

We should have great concern only about criticisms that are justified. Our true reputation will eventually become known. Some of us are slandered in the Christian community and within the church unfairly. For some the truth may not become known until they stand before the throne of God, but it will become known.

THE CURE FOR FEAR. Then Jesus encouraged them to be aggressive. Instead of being fearful, they should shout the truth about the kingdom and about Jesus from the mountain top.

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. (NASB) Matt. 10:27

Nothing spoken in secret was to be hidden. What they heard from Jesus in a whisper or in the darkness, they were to declare to the world from the roofs of buildings. Instead of being fearful, they were to be bold.

The cure for fear is to trust God and be aggressively bold.

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (NASB) Matt. 10:28

Proverbs 29:25 and Ephesians 6:6 echo Jesus' statements,

The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted. (NASB) Prov. 29:25

. . . not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers . . . (NASB) Eph. 6:6

We should not fear men, but God. That is the message. Jesus' point is that the cure for fear is to trust God and be

aggressively bold. Yes, persecution will follow, but it will come anyway if we are true disciples. Our problem is that we seek the approval of others more than the approval of God. We must remember that God cares for us and loves us!

Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. (NASB) Matt. 10:29-31

When we decided to believe in Him, we started following Him. We entered a spiritual war zone. Now we must fight or be defeated. What else should we expect when light and darkness collide? Christians are children of the Light. He called us to follow Him. He knows that we will be persecuted. We should expect to suffer. We should not fear nor be surprised when it comes.

PENALTY OF DENIAL. Some will flee persecution by denying Him. So Jesus added this,

Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

(NASB) Matt. 10:32-33

The point of this verse is that if we tell others about Him, Jesus will talk about us before God the Father; otherwise, He will not. Why should we expect to be treated any better? If we deny Him, then He will deny us. The Greek word translated as "deny" has the sense or meaning of "disowning, or renouncing." 1 John 2:23 tells us that those who deny Jesus actually never belonged to Him. They were never Christians.

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. (NASB) 1 John 2:23

The ones who speak about Jesus are the true Christians.

Today, some Christians do not out and out reject Jesus;

they just never talk about Him. They are afraid or indifferent. Lifestyle evangelism has been encouraged by many over the years. Those who teach that Christians should practice lifestyle evangelism say a believer's life captures the attention of non-Christians and leads them to Jesus Christ. They believe that we do not need to say anything about God to a person until that person asks about our life and our faith. They say we should "carefully" present Jesus Christ to them. But lifestyle evangelism has weaknesses. In fact, lifestyle evangelism is contrary to Jesus' teachings in this passage. Instead of being quiet, we are supposed to shout from the house tops and tell others about what we have heard. In fact, those who continually refuse to confront the world or tell others about Jesus may not belong to God at all (1 John 2:15-16).

Do you think that evangelism should avoid all and every form of conflict and tension? If so, listen to Jesus' next words,

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a

sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. (NASB) Matt. 10:34-36

As we have already seen, conflict and tension were common throughout Jesus' ministry. Jesus' point is that if the teacher encountered conflict, tension, insults, and rejection, why should a follower think that he or she should escape? Jesus expects you to tell others about Him. He knows that conflict will come to the faithful believer who engages the world. He sends us into the world knowing that conflict will occur. Jesus did not come to bring peace. Some families will be divided. The question is, "Are you following Jesus?"

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not

worthy of Me. (NASB) Matt. 10:37

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS. Jesus expects us to be willing to deny ourselves and to be willing to suffer for Him. That is the message in Jesus' next statement.

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. (NASB) Matt. 10:38-39

One who takes up Jesus' cross may encounter suffering, insult, persecution, self-denial, self-abandonment, and death for Him. One who takes up the cross is one who is intentionally willing to yield his entire being to Jesus. It is the ultimate in willing, sacrificial service for Jesus. Jesus is looking for those who will call Him Master and prove He is their Master by their lives. Are you willing to shout from the housetop to

the world declaring the good news about Jesus? Is Jesus truly your Lord and Master? Or, are Jesus'



od is not an ogre who does not care about His own. He will reward us for the faithful service that He has asked.

words just nice thoughts?

I imagine that the disciples were thinking after hearing these statements that if after being bold and suffering, many people responded positively, that Jesus would praise them for their faithful ministry. But Jesus surprised them when He said that those who responded to them had actually responded positively to Him and to God the Father,

He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. . (NASB) Matt. 10:40

It is a warning not to seek the praise and a following from those to whom we minister. The point is that God has given us the joy of sharing in His work. We are His messengers and He allows us to share in the results.

CONCLUSION. Jesus' words have been very serious. He calls us to tell others about Himself. He calls us to serve Him without expecting to be rich or famous. He expects us

to tell our families, friends, and strangers about Himself. He knows that we will suffer in a variety of ways. He encourages us not to be afraid by trusting Him and being bold. If necessary, we should be willing to die as He did. My friend, the days are coming when persecution will become worse. Jesus encouraged the disciples and He encourages us by promising rewards,

He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward. (NASB) Matt. 10:41-42

Jesus refers to three situations: helping a prophet, helping a righteous man, and helping a "little one." In each case, Jesus promises a different reward for different conduct. This suggests that God has different rewards for many different things that we do, including the ministry of His Word to others. Anything that we do for another will be returned to us in some form of reward.

God is not an ogre who does not care about His own. He

will reward us for the faithful service which He has asked of us.

Thus did Jesus teach that every kind of dedicated action is blessed by His Father, and no sacrifice for Him will ever be made in vain. At the conclusion of a life for service would come "pay day," when the Lord's servants would be rewarded for their consecrated efforts. These promises would be a great incentive to serve faithfully, but there is reason to believe that the greatest motivating power in the lives of everyone was not the promise of future rewards, but their overwhelming love for the Master who had commissioned them to minister for Him. Every true servant will gladly exclaim, "If He rewards me, that will be wonderful; if He does not, I'll do it anyway - just for His sake."¹

1. Ivor Powell. *Matthew's Majestic Gospel*. Kregel Publications. 1986. p. 204., modified