

The Call of Discipleship: *Lesson III*
“Lessons From the Training of the Twelve”

I. This lesson will continue to build on the principles that have introduced thus far in the previous studies on discipleship:

A. Very briefly, the sum of our previous lessons are as follows:

1. When Jesus called us to be disciples He was calling for a lifetime of commitment to the pursuit of becoming just as He is. (*Lesson 1*)
2. This means that we must start from scratch: We must allow the Gospel to create a “new man”, not simply an “improved man” (*Lesson 2*)

B. The goal for this study will be to approach this from a slightly different perspective, taking time to read some of the texts that record the time Jesus spent with His closest disciples, seeing what lessons we can apply:

II. Take a moment to consider, merely from an outsider’s perspective, how unlikely it was that the Apostles would have the success that they did in spreading the Gospel and establishing those first congregations:

A. A few of the issues they had working against them:

1. They had suffered the death of their central leader, who despite rumors of a resurrection is nowhere to be found
2. They endured persecution on a fairly routine basis, often with very intense bursts--sometimes from their own families
3. They preached by and large to hostile audiences who either thought their message was blasphemy or foolishness
4. The world around them was steeped in worshipping a pantheon of gods
 - a) Success would appear to be unlikely..

B. What might one to be even more amazed is that this was not their “Plan B” Jesus fully intended to place the future of His Church in the hands of men who were hopelessly flawed, uneducated, and unruly:

1. And yet, the spread of the Gospel of Jesus went far beyond catching on in a few places: It exploded across the whole of the Roman Empire, being described in Acts 17:6 as a movement that had turned the world upside down!

III. This has led many to ask the question, “What was so special about these men?”

- A. In truth, there was nothing special about these men-- what was *special* was everything about the training that they received as disciples of Jesus
- B. In a period of slightly over 3 years they would turn from willful and arrogant men into devout followers willing to lay down their lives for the cause they believed in: And they convinced *thousands* of others to do the same.
- C. Of the many benefits to reading the Gospel accounts, one is being able to view a blueprint on successful training of disciples: Plans drawn up by the Master Teacher!
 1. There are many ways to approach a study of Jesus’ time teaching these men, and we are going to do that over the next few lessons, but to start we are going to look at this from the vantage point of “core principles”
 2. In other words, with Jesus knowing as He did that His time with the 12 was limited, what did He consider vital characteristics to instill in His disciples?

I. Establishing a Sense of Trust:

A. The Beginning of that trust: *Luke 5:4-5, 10b-11, 27-28*

- I. There are more than a few astonishing points in this text:
 - a. First, is the willingness of these men to listen to Jesus, a carpenter, give them instructions on how to go about their trade: One that they would have been the authorities on:
 - b. Second, is that in both cases, the fishermen and the tax collector Levi, these men literally left everything behind, got up and followed him!
- II. These men were not following a complete stranger: There was some familiarity with Jesus at this point: and although it was still in the beginning stages, Jesus had worked on building of a sense of trust between himself and these men that would allow them to take their first steps

B. Jesus continues to build:

I. Their first trip out to sea: **Matt. 8:23-27**

- a. Not very long after being called, (perhaps immediately) the Disciples were led into a situation that would test their trust in their new Master
- b. While they were rebuked in v 26 for not having more trust in Jesus, The Lord still planned on using the moment to demonstrate to them that they could place trust in Him:

II. Another outing on Galilee: **Matt. 14:26-33**

- a. Matthew's account records a detail that the others do not: the role of Peter: in yet another event planned by Jesus to build their trust-- Peter was given the chance to do the impossible: Walk on water!
- b. While he would eventually start to sink, he learned an invaluable lesson: With his trust in the Lord, he could do the impossible!

C. A fully developed trust:

I. Before Jesus left his Apostles and other disciples, He gave them instructions on what was to follow, and where they were to be in order to participate: **Acts 1:4,8**

II. The men who we were introduced to in the beginning of the Gospel accounts, may very well have just packed up and separated after the Lord ascended- *out of sight out of mind!*

III. But these men were described as prayerfully awaiting the moment that the Lord had promised, ready to seize it when it came **Acts 1:13-14; 2:1, 16**

D. A compete trust in the Lord was central to the success of these men! And I believe that this is the reason why:

I. It is only through a complete trust in God that we will be able to truly let go of our trust in the World, and live a life anticipating God's promises:

- a. Consider the contrast in attitude between the men who were called in Luke 5, and those who professed to want to answer the call in **Matthew 8:19-22**
- b. Each one of these were unable to get past the difficulties of discipleship: each one was seemingly unable to trust the Lord:
- c. What a difference trusting in God makes!

2. A Sense of Something Greater: The Kingdom and Heaven to Come:

A. Trust enabled them to follow the Lord: Jesus would also equip them with other spiritual anchors to hold them in place: A couple of these were how he helped the Disciples to change their way of thinking; how they approached situations: Asking, “What does this do for the Kingdom”, “How is this preparing me for heaven” Questions like these gave them a sense of being part of something far greater than themselves:

I. Learning the language of the Kingdom:

a. When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom, it always held first priority:

i. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.... But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt. 6:10,33)

6:10,33)

ii. No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62)

b. Something that Jesus wanted to make very clear, was that there was no excuse good enough to warrant putting the Kingdom anywhere but first: **Luke**

14:15-21

c. ***Those who understand that there is no greater privilege than being a part of Christ’s Kingdom will not have difficulty placing it at highest priority***

i. There is truly no greater status: Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matt. 11:11)

ii. There is nothing of greater value: The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:44-46)

II. Learning to invest in Heaven:

a. Jesus wanted them to take to heart the concept of a future “payoff: **Matt.**

6:19-21

- b. Jesus wanted them to be excited about the glory of heaven, but he mostly used language that emphasized this involved investing in your future: not the present: *Success in this world is of limited importance*
 - c. The greatest blessing is in the age to come -*Mark 10:30*
- B. In what ways does having a “Kingdom Centered Attitude” help a disciple?

I. Unity in purpose:

- a. Paul spoke of preserving the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (*Eph. 4:3*)
 - i. The disciples began their time with Jesus acting like children: competing for position in the Kingdom: And yet I believe that the constant reminders of the Lord that the Kingdom is something bigger than any one person, allowed them to work together to achieve the spread of the Gospel:
 - ii. This must be something held in mind if a group of disciples is going to grow and flourish: every action must be weighed against the balance of the good of the Kingdom:

II. Living in anticipation:

- a. We want immediate satisfaction: It makes achieving goals more difficult when we face some discouragement along the way: But as *Luke 1:45* states, blessed are those who believe in the fulfillment of God’s promise
 - i. Those early disciples were men who wanted action! they thought in the short term and made short sighted decisions:
 - ii. But these same men would face danger and death, and would encourage others to do so--- not for anything on this Earth, but for something greater to come: It allowed Paul to say that to Die is gain, and Peter to encourage saints to suffer for a little while to obtain the outcome of their faith:
 - iii. Really these two concepts go hand in hand: The actions of a disciple should always be viewed in both of these lights:

3. A Sense of Compassion and Urgency: *Philippians 2:3-8, Luke 15*

Learning to Trust allowed the Disciples to take hold of the Lord's hand and follow Him. Learning that they were a part of something much greater than themselves, with greater fulfillment to come assisted them in staying true to the course they had started : But if they had no sense of compassion, no sense of

urgency to share it, then those traits would have stayed with them and the Gospel wouldn't have spread.

A. Learning to Build, not destroy: *Luke 9:51-56*

1. Luke 9 gives us a picture of men who had not yet grasped the concept of showing mercy as you have been shown: Turning over tables in the temple was something they could get behind: but viewing the crowds with compassion was not something they comprehended:

A. Jesus taught them to feel compassion in place of inconvenience: *Mk. 6:34-37*

B. Jesus taught them to feel a desire to give souls shelter: *Matt. 23:37*

C. Through acts of forgiveness, He would teach unconditional compassion: *Luke 22:50-51, Luke 23:34*

B. Compelled to save others: *John 4:35, Luke 10:2: Jesus on both of these occasions presented the world as field, one that did not lie dormant, or was even at the early stages of growth: It was a field bursting with produce that urgently needed to be brought in lest the crop rot in the field-- If only there were more workers! This sense of urgency can be seen in the work of the Apostles in establishing the early Church, and in instructing it.*

1. Examples of the Urgent Attitude:

A. "We cannot stop speaking!" Acts 4:20

B. "we must be devoted to ministry" Acts 6:1-4

C. "immediately he proclaimed Jesus" Acts 9:20

D. Paul, and the other disciples would demonstrate on a number of occasions an urgent desire to either get to an area to preach, or to strengthen disciples

2. Urgency seen in Instruction:

A. In making disciples: 2 Tim. 4:2

B. In keeping disciples: Jude 23

C. *The kingdom would not have spread if the followers of The Lord had not learned to feel compassion on those outside the fold. Their compassion would have been next to useless if they had not felt a sense of urgency to do something about the condition of those around them: Are we making disciples without compassion? With no sense of urgency? Do you know any of these? They seem to go hand in hand!*