



## Discipleship Lesson 1 1Q 2014

### Disciples and Scripture

Before we begin the new quarter, I wanted to follow up on a point from last week's lesson regarding baptism and church membership. We were discussing why don't we baptize into Christ, why do we require people to make all these changes in their lives before they are baptized, rather than bringing them, in baptism to Christ, for the power to overcome in their relationship with Him

We speculated it may be to "protect" the church from those deemed to be unsavory, not yet orthodox enough.

After class, James Erlich mentioned to me that we could solve the problem by baptizing immediately when people are convicted and want to give their lives to Christ, like they did in Bible times, but membership in the church is something achieved by the vote of the church. Thus, not hold the vote for membership until whatever standards, the various church's determine are necessary to constitute spiritual maturity enough to be a member of the church, which would entail voting, ability to hold office etc.

I thought this was "brilliant" why don't we do it this way?

Is it because we recognize on some level that when someone is baptized into Christ they enter the mystical body of Christ and become part of the church invisible, and we want to believe that our denominational church is the repository of all such members?

Could it be our denominationalism has been misunderstood? Could it be that denominations are manifestations of fracturing amongst the body of Christ, as confusion creeps in, and that what should motivate one to join a denomination, is not necessarily the same thing that motivates one to give their heart to Christ? Specifically, can one join a denomination because they identify with the mission of that organization and want to use the gifts Christ has given them to further that mission? So could there be two people, both who have given their lives to Christ and are renewed in heart, but have fields of service, led by the Holy Spirit, in two different denominations?

Should we lead people to Christ and let the Holy Spirit determine which field of labor that person is best suited to pursue, including which denomination?

Would our arguments today over denomination be similar to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians?

My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Peter"; still another, "I follow Christ."

<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?  
1Cor 1:11-13



Are we today doing this? Are we baptized into Luther, Calvin, Knox, White, or are we baptized into Christ?

Which brings us to the **Introduction** to our lesson, Christ's example of making disciples, of the Great Commission, the process whereby we become followers of Jesus.

What is our mission to the world? How would you state our mission? What is the Great Commission?

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." MT 28:19,20

What does this mean? What are we to do? Make followers of all the peoples of the world, "baptizing" meaning what? Simply dunking or sprinkling with water, depending on denomination? Or when Jesus said baptizing He meant something more?

Immersing their minds, hearts, characters, into the character of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – which is what? It is immersing people into the truth of God's character and methods of love, teaching them how God's kingdom of love operates, a surrender of self, dying to selfishness, and living to love, which is then symbolized by the act of water baptism.

Thus one of the founders of our church wrote:

"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known.** Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth... **The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love.**" Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

This is what Christ dealt with 2000 years ago, Isaiah prophesied that darkness covers the people gross darkness the people. John, in John 1, stated that Jesus was the light to lighten all men, but even though the light was shining into the darkness the darkness did not understand it.

What about today? Is there still darkness in the world, in the church, about God's character and methods of love?

Do we promote the kingdom of love by denominationalism, by harping on doctrinal differences, by running down other organizations, by bragging up our own?

Should we be promoting our denomination, or our Savior Jesus Christ?



And then, we can show how our organization is working to further the mission of Christ, the revealing of God's true character and methods to prepare the world for His return, and invite people to join the mission?

One of the devil's tricks is to get groups pitted against each other and arguing over various doctrinal points, all while ignoring the truth about God's character, methods and principles.

Thus 2000 years ago the Sadducees and Pharisees argued constantly over the state of the dead and resurrection, but what understanding of God did they hold? Even if one group was right regarding resurrection did it do them any good? No, they still rejected and crucified Jesus.

This is like many Christians today, so concerned with right doctrine, which day is the Sabbath, what is about the state of the dead, what foods are right to eat, what is right to wear, who is the beast of revelation, what is the mark of the beast, what is the right ending for this prophecy or that prophecy – but what does it matter if they don't know the truth about God and His kingdom of love? Don't take it from me, take it from Paul:

I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but **if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell.** I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains—**but if I have no love, I am nothing.** <sup>3</sup>I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burnt— **but if I have no love, this does me no good.**

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; <sup>5</sup>love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; <sup>6</sup>love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. <sup>7</sup>Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.

<sup>8</sup>**Love is eternal.** There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. <sup>9</sup>**For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial;** <sup>10</sup>**but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.**

<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I have grown up, I have no more use for childish ways. <sup>12</sup>What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God's knowledge of me.

<sup>13</sup>Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love. (1Cor 13)

Thoughts? What is he saying? That without an experience of God's love, of partaking of the kingdom of love, without being immersed (baptized) into the character of God, God's love, then all right doctrine, prophecy, languages and works are worthless, for we remain outside God's design for life and in a terminal condition.



But someone, who has been renewed in love, may not understand some point of doctrine correctly, but they are healed in the inner man and have entered eternal life. This is what really matters, bringing people back to God's true character and methods of love!

We have so focused on right doctrine we have lost site of righteousness – of actually being right with God. Worse, we have supplanted true righteousness, being renewed in heart to love like God loves, with a false righteousness of legal declaration, without actual transformation.

Am I saying doctrine doesn't matter, or it doesn't matter what we believe if we have love? Of course not! Doctrine does matter in its right place, and what is the right place for right doctrine? Always connected to the truth about God.

If we separate doctrine from God's character and stand them up like toy soldiers, with their proof texts and present them as stand alone ideas, we have created a distorted reality in which the doctrines work to obstruct the greater reality of God's kingdom.

Every doctrine, rightly understood, is valuable in that it leads us to a deeper and more meaningful appreciation of God's kingdom and character of love. This is why we value and share the *Fundamental Focus* pamphlet, because it demonstrates that every doctrine does indeed reveal the truth of God's character of love.

So, what does it mean to make disciples of all nations? To bring all people back to love for God, His methods, principles and love for each other, so that we actually live in harmony with His methods, with Him and each other.

The introduction also asks what method Jesus used to draw people to Him. Thoughts?

- Miracles
  - Miracles were done as an outworking of love to those whose hearts were open to receive truth and love from God
  - But miracles were NOT done as a proof or evidence to win converts or followers or to pass some test of orthodoxy
    - “Some Pharisees came to Jesus and started to argue with him. They wanted to trap him, so they asked him to perform a miracle to show that God approved of him. But Jesus gave a deep groan and said, “Why do the people of this day ask for a miracle? No, I tell you! No such proof will be given to these people!” (MK 8:11,12)
- Compassion and love
- Serving others
- Healing, ministering
- Teaching truths in ways people could understand
- Reasonable and practical truths
- Revealing God to be a God of love
- Disabusing people of contradictory teachings and hypocritical practices



- Overthrowing the idea that one should follow church leaders blindly, but teaching people to think for themselves
- Breaking social convention, talking to women, touching lepers, socializing with tax collectors, talking with prostitutes, seeking to heal rather than seeking to condemn
- His attitude was NOT one of finding faults in order to condemn, but like a physician He loved people and any fault He saw He sought to heal. His frustration grew, just like a physician, when He saw defects He could heal, but people hardened their hearts and wouldn't allow Him to heal.
- Other methods?

## SABBATH

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Read memory text, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39)

Thoughts?

What is the message of this passage? What is Jesus saying? Does this go back to our discussion on doctrines? If we separate our teaching, prophetic interpretations, doctrines from Jesus we miss the entire point and instead of leading people to Christ for healing, we lead them to a system of rules, burdens, oppressions and discouragements.

## SUNDAY

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Read second paragraph, "The narrative of Christ's..." thoughts?  
Did Christ overcome the devil by "quoting" Scripture? Think carefully...

Or did Christ overcome by choosing to live in harmony with the Scripture and practice God's methods and principles as taught in Scripture, and used the Scripture to convey His purposes and intents of His heart and attitude? In other words, Jesus comprehended and practiced what the Scripture taught, He didn't merely memorize and quote Scripture when in crisis.

I have had many patients who have come to see me distressed, overwhelmed, frustrated and confused. They have had a crisis in their life, they had been taught to memorize Scripture and then quote it when in crisis, but in this circumstance it didn't work. Is memorizing and quoting enough? Or is there something more needed for victory?

It is when the meaning, the reality of which the Scripture is pointing is internalized into the heart and mind, resulting in an abiding trust in God, that one gains power for victorious living. Merely quoting a Scripture doesn't provide that power or that trust.

Many use Scripture almost like magical incantations, with the idea that if they cite the Scripture something supernatural will happen. I have known of people who wouldn't travel without a Bible in



the car, because they believed the Bible provided supernatural protection. This is superstition. The Bible doesn't provide protection, God provides protection. The Bible is God's inspired Word to lead us to Him. It is in our union with Him that we experience power, growth, healing, wisdom, confidence, love, and the ability to overcome.

Just as with doctrines, if we separate the Scripture from the God of Scripture we experience no benefit. So, is the Scripture valuable, important, absolutely, but only as it leads us to and connects us with Christ.

The lesson recognizes this same point, in the bottom green section it states, "Though it's important to know the Bible, that alone isn't enough. Some of the biggest-named Bible scholars have not even been believing Christians."

## **MONDAY**

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Read first paragraph? Thoughts?

What was the difference between Jesus' use of Scripture and that of the Pharisees, or even Satan himself in the wilderness temptation?

Didn't the tempters use Scripture? What is the difference?

- Jesus used Scripture to reveal truth
- Satan used Scripture to obscure truth
- What does this mean about using Scripture? That Scripture can be misused, therefore, quoting Scripture alone is not enough.

Who was the audience to whom Jesus quoted Scripture? Did Jesus quote Scripture to Pilate? How did He deal with Pilate? Why didn't He quote Scripture to Pilate?

The lesson seems to be using Jesus' example of when He did use Scripture to suggest that Scripture is the only means to be used. Is this so? Should we have other means in addition to Scripture, especially for speaking to those who do not yet value or believe in Scripture?

In fact, if one insists on using Scripture and quoting Scripture to those who don't believe in it, will you likely have success? So do we need threads other than Scripture? What are those other threads? From the Scripture (Science/nature Rom 1:20, and experience

Why is appeal to Scripture alone, i.e. sola scriptura NOT sufficient for our arguments?

It doesn't help reach those who currently don't believe it. But also...

- What did those who promoted slavery use? They used Scripture.
- Those who promote polygamy use Scripture
- those who continue to promote inequality of women use Scripture



- those who promote God as the source of inflicted pain and suffering use Scripture
- those who attack homosexuals use Scripture
- those who suggest God must be appeased use Scripture

Am I saying Scripture is unreliable, or uninspired, or faulty in any way? Absolutely not! I have every confidence in God's Word as inspired by God for our salvation – yet that Word can be misused and misapplied, so relying solely on Scripture opens us up to deception.

Did Christ use Scripture – absolutely, but what made His use of it different from those who misused it?

- He understood it – but what allowed Him to understand it properly?
- He knew His Father, His Father's character and methods and then when reading Scripture could understand the right meaning.
- But those who opposed Jesus used Scripture, but read it through a different filter, a different concept of God, a god who they conceived as being intolerant, prejudicial, legalistic, requiring penalties be paid etc. Thus though seeing they did not see and hearing they did not hear.
- We have the same problem today.
- Jesus also used the Integrative-Evidence Based Approach – He did not use Scripture alone or sola scriptura, this idea is a tool of the devil to divide and separate the threads of evidence God has given. We should harmonize the threads, not divide them.
- Those threads are: Scripture, Science, Experience; How did Jesus use all three?
- He clearly quoted Scripture – but also He used nature to illustrate how natural law works constantly stating God's kingdom is like, or works like this. He also had His disciples experience Him, and the evidence of His person. On one occasion saying specifically to Thomas, put your hands in my side, touch me, experience me, have faith, believe based on what you experience.
- Here are a couple of quotes from one of the founders of our church, documenting what method we, as an organization, were to use in determining our beliefs, but we have diverted onto the path of Scripture alone:
  - In the study of the sciences also, we are to obtain a knowledge of the Creator. **All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world.** Science brings from her research only fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God. **Rightly understood, both the book of nature and the written word make us acquainted with God** by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which he works. {CE 66.2}
  - **Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature.** {Ed 130.3}

This week I received an email from one of our online listeners, Mark Ueek, who sent this quote from Derek Barton, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry:

“God is Truth. There is no incompatibility between science and religion. Both are seeking the same truth. Science shows that God exists.”



Thoughts?

- What is the danger of Scripture alone? Confusion and disintegration into factions, 34,000 different groups claim the Bible supports them.
- What is the danger of science alone – godlessness
- What is the danger of evidence alone – mysticism

## **TUESDAY**

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Read second paragraph, “During Christ’s earthly...” thoughts? Are the people of Christ’s day the only ones who relate to the Scripture in legalistic ways?

The lesson rightly points out in the second paragraph, “Christ-centered religion is rooted in a heart transformation that leads to ethical behavior.”

Thoughts?

Any examples of unethical behavior because people are following the rules they believe come from Scripture?

- Violence against homosexuals
- Shooting abortion doctors and bombing abortion clinics
- What about passing laws forcing people to worship in certain ways, go to church on certain days, be baptized in certain ways, because one believes the Bible describes a particular day or method of baptism as the correct one?
- What about using the power of the state to enforce one’s religious beliefs upon others? What if that belief is to ban abortion?
- What about the church firing a woman from her church employed position because she divorced her husband after years of physical abuse, but without “Biblical” grounds?
- What about disfellowshipping a woman who sits at a hearing in Collegedale for her daughter who is seeking partner benefits for her lesbian partner, even though the mother, never speaks in favor just sits next to her daughter?
  - What did the Pharisees in Christ’s day say about Christ’s association with prostitutes?
  - Who is more Christlike, the mother sitting with her daughter, or the church leaders taking a stand against sin by disfellowshipping the mother from membership in the church?

Where do humans focus? On the outward appearance, on behavior – where does God focus – on the heart. Any examples of people, considered righteous by God, doing behavior that go against the stated rules?

- Rahab – a prostitute who lies but is in the hall of faith
- David – AFTER his sin of adultery and murder, when did sexual relations with Bathsheba no longer constitute sin?



How do you explain these?

It took faith for Rahab to align herself with God. God doesn't applaud her lying, He applauds her choosing to side with Him and act in accordance with her belief in Him to do her best in the situation. She didn't know much, but she acted on what she knew to protect God's people.

The theologians who believe our problem is our "sins" i.e. bad deeds, which need to be punished, have problems with David. He is supposed to have repented, which in the legal model means "to turn away from the sinful behavior." And to them the sin is sexual relationships with Bathsheba, thus they think David, after repenting should turn away from her, not embrace her and place her first amongst his wives.

Yet, God sees it differently, and blesses them with Solomon. What is the difference?

David did repent, and he turned away from SELFISHNESS in his heart. He was no longer motivated to "save self" but to save others and in this case to as far as possible repair the damage he inflicted upon Bathsheba. His actions, by killing her husband, made her a widow, took her livelihood, home, property, name, station, reputation. She would have ended up on the street, homeless. Thus the legal model would have added more damage to her. But, David, having experienced a new heart and right spirit, married her, to as far as possible restore to her what he had taken.

Ethical, Christlike behavior, cannot be distilled down to a list of rules, behaviors, or actions. The situation will frequently determine which is the ethical and appropriate action to take. The appropriate action always heals, restores, saves, in harmony with truth, love and freedom.

Thoughts?

## **WEDNESDAY**

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Read third paragraph, "Beginning at Moses..." thoughts?

On the road to Emmaus why didn't Christ just appear before them in glory, perform some miracles and declare Himself?

Why must their faith be established upon the evidences of fulfilled Bible prophecy?

Because miracles can be faked, Satan can impersonate Christ, false Messiahs can come and still come today. It is only through the evidence, reasoned out with God and, understood and practiced that we can have confidence in our beliefs.

Do you know the truth about God, His design so much that nothing can shake you from it?

Do miracles determine truth? When a serpent spoke in Eden did that make what the serpent said true?



When Jesus was miraculously transported to the top of the Temple and an angel spoke to Him, did the accompanying miracles make what the angel say true?

If you were suddenly confronted with an angel “of light” and teleported instantly to the top of the capital in Washington DC and given some instruction, along with Scripture quotation, what would you do?

What if you had an angel visit you and give you some gold plates with a new theology on it, what would be the basis upon which you would determine whether this new theology is true or false?

Read bottom green section, thoughts?

Truth brings conviction, this is the burning in the heart, however, there is a false burning, a counterfeit, which is promoted by some.

In that view the burning in the bosom doesn't come from evidence of Scripture being comprehended and the conviction of the soul. No, in that view the mind actually turns away from evidence and truth and instead goes into private prayer and prays long and hard for a feeling, not for evidence, for a feeling a conviction, a burning in the bosom to determine whether something is true or not. But James tells us this method is the way of temptation, the way in which Satan deceives.

When we pray we are to pray for God's Spirit of Truth and Love to enlighten our faculties so that every person “can be fully persuaded in their own mind.” (Rom 14:5). We are not to stop thinking. When you have all evidence on your side, when all truth supports you, then you want people to investigate and examine the evidence. But when you are the father of lies and have no truth, then you want practices that move people with emotions while simultaneously getting them to believe it is pious and holy to ignore the evidence or use ones feelings as the barometer to determine what is true and false.

## **THURSDAY**

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Read second paragraph, “The earliest Christian...” thoughts?

Should we have confidence in Scripture? Absolutely – for what? For all truth necessary for salvation and to understand God's methods and live in harmony with them. It is not the best book for calculus, or piano instruction, or anatomy and physiology, or microbiology etc. To use the Bible for what it was not intended leads to error and opens the Bible up to ridicule, like using the Bible as an astronomy text.

How do we determine what Scripture is reliable for and what it is not?

- Martin Luther didn't include James, Hebrews, Revelation and Jude in his “cannon” but relegated them to the end and said he couldn't find Jesus in them.
- Thomas Jefferson used a razor to remove most of the miracles from the Bible



- Roman Catholics and the original King James Version include the Apocrypha, but most Protestants do not
- Mormons include the Book of Mormon as Scripture
- Muslims include the Koran as Scripture
- Recently some have tried to include the book of Thomas

What determine whether something is “Scripture”?

What standard? What can we utilize?

If we don’t have any knowledge of God at all, and we don’t use reason, don’t think, don’t use evidence, if we surrender our thinking, experience, common sense to others, then we can accept and believe anything, including non-sense and superstitious systems of belief.

## **FRIDAY**

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Read Question 1 – “What are some...” thoughts?

I am asked how to I reach people who don’t believe in God, or the Bible? By demonstrating God’s laws in their lives – law of liberty etc. In lectures I present how God’s design permeates all nature and how Scripture teaches this design.

Epigenetics now document that Scripture is more scientifically accurate than Darwin, who postulated random mutations caused finch beaks to be different.

The promise for long life from honoring parents is not an arbitrary use of power to cause the outcome, but the cascade of what happens when we have relationship conflict, activation of inflammatory pathways and destruction of our physical health resulting in early death.

Discuss question 4 – thoughts? Consider what Peter said about Paul’s writings.

Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. <sup>16</sup> He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.  
2Pet 3:15,16

Do we need to be careful quoting texts here and there? Could we actually be quoting Satan if we do this?