



Discipleship Lesson 13 1Q 2014

The Cost of Discipleship

Here is another email I recently received:

I have been ordering C&R materials & sharing them for a few years, thanks to my Uncle Martin & Aunt Antoinette that introduced us to your ministry several years ago. So many have been so blessed! Another couple in our church has also been so blessed that they have ordered the dvd's several times over the last few months for all the church members & many other folks (tho we got some flack from our pastor) & we continue to run out. :)! I have to share the following message I received from friends many states away that I sent the "God & your brain DVD to. These folks have been SDA's all their lives & have worked for many supporting ministries of the SDA church.

WOW! I'm so glad you shared this with me. We need to have a phone conversation when I get home it's too much to write here but these are an amazing NEED for all of us to see. Toni it is transforming! I have profusely thanked you but you have no idea the depths of which this is touching my family me included. Wish I had heard this long ago as well.

This is only one of many friends that are so blessed and excited about this message! And the fact that you send all this FREE. I have had many that are so touched by that fact, & have started ordering them to share as well! :) We will continue to support & uplift comeandreason in our prayers!! The blessings are evident in the many hearts that are finally able to begin healing!!

Thank you so MUCH!!

SABBATH

The title for this week's lesson immediately reminded me of Rachel's comments last week when she mentioned that before people are baptized they need to consider the cost of commitment to Christ.

And I thought perhaps I had confused things on this point last week so I wanted to clarify with you. Is there a difference in helping someone understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus, how it will impact their life, and indoctrination into a certain set of beliefs?

I think Rachel brought up a great point when cautioning that people need to consider the cost of committing to Christ – but isn't it also true we should not seek to place barriers in the way of people committing to Christ?



How do we strike that balance?

Read first paragraph, “Throughout history...” thoughts?

No doubt many good people have been persecuted for accepting Jesus as their Savior, but, what about:

- The six million Jews killed by the Nazis?
- The Muslims killed by so-called Christians during the crusades?
- What about the 80 million Hindus killed by Muslims between 1000-1500 AD?
- The witches burned by Christians in the colonies?
- The Protestants killed by Catholics and Catholics killed by Protestants?

Does being persecuted set one apart as being on God’s side?

Does the lack of persecution set one apart as being on God’s side?

What does persecution mean? That there is evil and selfishness in the world, and in the world the strong will prey on the weak. Jesus said:

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. Lk 6:45

So, when persecution happens what can we say with confidence? That those who are persecuting others are not operating on God’s methods or following God’s purposes.

But, can we draw any conclusions about the righteousness of those being persecuted? No, the attitudes and responses of the persecuted will reveal their character and upon whose methods they operate, not merely the fact they are persecuted.

What sets one apart as being on God’s side?

- Membership in church organization?
- Baptism by immersion?
- Partaking communion?
- Paying tithe?
- Claiming the blood of Jesus as your payment for sin?
- Acknowledging one’s sin before God?
- Or, actually be reborn, having a new heart, trusting God so that one dies to fear and selfishness and is recreated within by the HS.

Read third paragraph, “Despite the promises...” thoughts?

Is there anything wrong with wealth? Is wealth a sign of rightness with God? With what did Satan tempt Christ? Third temptation was with all the riches of the world.



Jesus said, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” MT 16:26

Are there some things worth dying for? What things could be worth dying for?

- Saving people you love?
- Some greater good?
- Standing up for principle, belief, God?
- What about riches, cars, houses, stocks, gold?

Do we ever over-value riches?

THURSDAY

Jump to THURSDAY’s lesson and read second paragraph, “In a sense...” thoughts?

Is this why we follow Jesus for the reward? Is this a good reason to follow Jesus?

Is the kingdom of God done good service when we promote a message that emphasizes either avoiding punishment or seeking eternal reward?

What is the problem with such preaching? To what motivation does it appeal?

Is it not feeding our selfishness under the guise of righteousness?

Here are a couple of historic quotes, written more than 100 years ago:

Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from the hope of reward or the fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship.— PP 523

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour's matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary's cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him. {DA 480.3}

Why this emphasis on either hope of reward or avoidance of punishment? These are fear based motivation – the appeal to reward is really a way of pointing out what they will lose if they don’t accept the reward, which is a fear based appeal.

Fear is the infection of sin – and perfect love casts out fear. We are to present the truth about God’s character of love, which drives out fear and wins us as loyal friends and devotees to God and His kingdom.



What would you recommend for evangelism? What should we tell someone as the reason to follow Jesus Christ?

- There simply is no better way to live because
 - It is sensible
 - Reasonable
 - The basis of life
 - Health and happiness cannot be achieved outside the parameters upon which life was constructed to operate.
- If someone has a Ford Fusion – what fuel should they put in it? Unleaded gasoline – why? Why should they not put diesel or water in the tank? Because it was not designed to operate on diesel or water.
- Everyone of God’s instructions for us are for our good, to lead us back into the paths of life and health
- Do we present God as Designer and His law as the design protocols for life and thus returning to harmony with Him is the only sensible course?

Even if there were not an eternal reward, is there a better way to live.

SUNDAY

Read Luke 12:49-53:

I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Thoughts? What fire? Was Christ speaking of combustion or something else? Is the fire Christ spoke of here different from the fire in the end of time, the fire that consumes sin?

Here is the same idea from Matthew – does it add any insight?

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn
“ ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—
³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’
³⁷ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take



his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. MT 10:34-49

What is this idea of a sword? Why did Christ say He came to bring a sword, yet when Peter pulled his sword and struck the servant of the High Priest Jesus said: “Put away your sword”? Jn 18:11

Was Jesus speaking of a physical sword or something else? Is Jesus advocating violence or something else?

What is going on? Any other Bible verses come to mind?

Revelation 19:19-21 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. **The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.**

Wait a minute – what’s going on? Is God using power to inflict death? Does God use His power to torment, torture and eliminate His opposition?

Notice the sword is coming out of the rider’s mouth, who is the Rider? The Rider is Christ. Do you think He will have a large piece of metal sticking out of His mouth when He returns? No, what comes out of a person’s mouth? Words and what kind of words does Christ always speak? Truth! Therefore, the sword is symbolic of the truth.

“The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

Well how could the word of God kill? Is He condemning them? Is He speaking ugly words? Is He saying “Die, die, die”? Of course not.

The wicked are destroyed “because they did love the truth and thus be saved.” 2 Thes 2:10.

Why would it be that people die because they didn’t love the truth? How is it that truth is a sword that cuts and divides? How does truth destroy? Why do those who prefer lies die when confronted with truth?

The wicked have hardened their minds in lies, solidified their characters in falsehood, warped their selves in deception and the sword of God is the truth that cuts through their lies right to their inner self. And what happens in the mind, heart, character of someone who has lived lies when the truth shines in?



Here is an historic view originally written in 1888 and then republished in 1911, from a book entitled *The Great Controversy*, what do you think of this description:

God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; **yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.** {GC 541.2} [Consider – how can the manifestations of retributive justice be consistent with God's character of mercy and benevolence? Which law lens do you look through? If one uses the Imperial Roman lens of imposed rules requiring externally imposed punishment, then one finds conflict. But if one looks through the lens of Design law, the protocols upon which life is built then we find a beautiful harmony.]

God does not force the will or judgment of any. [Would this be true if God were to be the one who inflicts externally imposed pain and death on those who don't obey Him? No, in order for this to be true death and pain cannot come out from God as an infliction upon them.] He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. **He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love.** [What makes someone worthy of love? Do men who physically abuse their wives engender love?] **He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes.** {GC 541.3} [When God is presented as a being who is the source of inflicted pain and suffering do those qualities draw forth admiration? Again, which law lens do you see God through?]

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [How can we harmonize this idea that the principles of the divine government are to love one's enemies, with the torture and death of God's enemies? If one holds to imposed law one cannot because one sees God as inflicting torture and death, but when we return to design law we see the truth that the torture and death result from unremedied sin not an imposition by God] God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and **even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character. He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive



hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power **are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? **Truth will never be agreeable to a liar;** meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1} [What is being described, imposed punishments or natural results?]

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; [Why not? What prevents them? Is God the obstacle?]** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; **but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. [Why are they tortured? What is the glory of God to them? Is the glory of God harmful to the righteous? What causes the suffering and pain? Is it God or is it unremedied sin in the sinner?]** They would long to flee from that holy place. **They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** {GC 542.2} [Who fixes or determines the destiny of the wicked? Is it decided in a courtroom in heaven? Or is it decided in the hearts of each person? And what is the determining factor? Character, whether one loves God and His methods or prefers Satan and his methods]

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [Why are the wicked lost because God doesn't want them saved? Why is a gangrenous foot amputated, because doctors don't want to save it? God's verdict is they are incurable – does that mean God's verdict makes them incurable? Is God's verdict the cause of their condition, the reason they die? The typical judicial presentation is that it is Gods' judgment that is carried out upon the wicked. No, God's verdict is His diagnosis, simply pronouncing the reality of the condition of the wicked. They are terminal and beyond healing, incurable and they are in this condition as a result of their own choice, not God's verdict.]

So, what does it mean that Christ brought a sword? A sword to do what? What does it mean to turn family members against each other? On what basis?

Read first paragraph SUNDAY, "Modern television..." thoughts?



What is the paragraph doing? While it is written to make obvious that they are “spinning” the words of Jesus to imply a meaning Jesus never intended, how many modern religious teachers do this very things to the message of Jesus?

Any examples?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, - “Discipleship...” thoughts? What do you think of the idea that we must be honest in the way we present our message? How would you present our message?

What is righteousness by faith? Is there a difference between righteousness by faith and justification by faith? What is the honest way to communicate this?

- That when we have faith in God that He declares us righteous and we have legal pardon, even though we are not righteous? That Jesus’ righteousness is credited to us and thus God declares we are righteous, even though we are not?
- Or is it legal pardon, forgiveness, that we are pardoned or forgiven if we accept the payment of Christ’s blood to our account?
- Or, justice required God to punish sin and thus He punished the only innocent One in our place to satisfy His justice?

Are any of these ideas honest? No, they are filled with falsehoods and distortions about God and His character and government because they are all based on the wrong concept of God’s law. Every one of these ideas comes through the Imperial Roman view of law.

We get an honest representation of our message when we return to the Creator God and view His law as the law upon which life was built.

- God is love and built His universe to operate upon the principles of love
- Adam was created in harmony with God’s character and principles and was capable of exercising his power of choice to solidify himself into loyalty. But he and Eve chose to believe a lie and instead broke trust and changed themselves to beings infected with fear and selfishness.
- We are born with a condition of fear and selfishness we did not choose, which is deviant from God’s design, and this condition, if not remedied, is terminal.
- God sent Jesus to fix what was broken in humankind and restore the species back into unity with God and His design protocols for life.
- Those who examine the evidence God has provided and choose to believe the truth are won to trust. This is a change of heart from natural state of distrust to trust. God recognizes that trust has aligned the heart with Him, opened the door to the soul and thus God recognizes that the person is no longer against God, but set right, or righteous by faith. In that trust relationship the Holy Spirit is poured out and transforms the inner person.



Read third paragraph, “Before baptism...” What is the cross we must bear? Why must we bear a cross? For what purpose?

This was written more than 100 years ago, what do you think?

The Lord brings His children over the same ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility fills the mind, and the character is transformed; then they are victorious over self, and in harmony with Christ and the Spirit of heaven. **The purification of God's people cannot be accomplished without suffering.** . . . He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. True grace is willing to be tried. If we are loath to be searched by the Lord, our condition is one of peril. . . . {ML 92.2}

If when the Lord reveals your errors you do not repent or make confession, his providence will bring you over the ground again and again. You will be left to make mistakes of a similar character, you will continue to lack wisdom, and will call sin righteousness, and righteousness sin. The multitude of deceptions that will prevail in these last days will encircle you, and you will change leaders, and not know that you have done so. {RH, December 16, 1890 par. 19}

What is being described? What is the purpose of bearing a cross? It is for our victory, for our overcoming, for our strengthening, for our development of character.

We only develop, only grow stronger as we choose the right and say no to the wrong. It is true we don't have the power to overcome unaided, but we must make the choice, then God provides the power.

The HS works to enlighten and convict, to bring us to the cross road of decision, then we are left free to make our choice. When we choose the right THEN we receive divine power sufficient for the task, but we don't receive the power until we make the choice. Many people wait until they are empowered to choose.

Others, when God brings them over a difficulty in their character (notice I am not suggesting all trails are for our development, only those which serve to expose character flaw and give us opportunity for overcoming), a place where they are faced again with a choice to do right, but which would cause suffering, some instead of choosing the right and bearing their cross to overcome, use their suffering to garner sympathy and validate themselves as not needing to really change.

There are those here upon whom great light in warnings and reproofs has shone. Whenever reproofs are given, **the enemy seeks to create in those reprov'd a desire for human sympathy.** Therefore I would warn you to beware lest in appealing to the sympathy of others, and going back over your past trials, you again err on the same points in seeking to build yourselves up. **The Lord brings his erring children over the same ground again and again; but if they continually fail to heed the admonitions of his Spirit, if they fail to reform on**



every point where they have erred, he will finally leave them to their own weakness. {HS 137.4}

Why does God finally leave them, because He is fed up, or because at some point people destroy the faculties that respond to the Spirit of truth and there is nothing more God can do for them?

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs, “The cost of discipleship...” thoughts? How do we overcome? Is it force of will? Does will have a role to play? Where do we exercise or will, to do what?

Have you ever heard the greatest battle we will ever fight is with self? What does it mean? Is it limited to addictions?

What about the person who is afraid of rejection – are they fighting with others or self? How?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “The rewards...” thoughts? What are the rewards of discipleship?

Well – it depends on whose disciple one is: Are you a disciple of the Designer or dictator?

Disciples of the dictator? What might such disciples look like?

- Rules, regulations, punishments
- Pharisees
- Seek to use force, intimidation, criticism
- What are the rewards to such disciples?
 - Power
 - Ego boosts
 - Worldly honor and recognition
 - Control over others
 - Wont associate with “sinners”

Disciples of the Designer, what might such disciples look like?

- Living in harmony with God’s design
- Principle based living not rules based living
- Loves people
- Compassion on sinners
- Seeks to use resources to help others
- Rules are not an end to themselves but only tools to help the immature

FRIDAY



Read first two paragraphs, “Fire comes down from God...” thoughts? How do you understand this?

What is the purpose of putting these paragraphs at this point in the lesson, when we are talking about counting the cost of discipleship?

Is it to incite fear? What does fear do to love? What does God want from us? Love, can you get love by threat?

Should we interpret such descriptions as God threatening us?

What other ways to understand such statements?

All are punished according to their deeds? How does this work in reality?

Which law does one hold:

Roman Imperial law – then punishment is something inflicted by an external authority upon law breakers. In this view some authorized body investigates the crimes (sins) and determines extent of guilt and then what is proper punishment and then some authorized agency inflicts the punishment upon the law breaker.

Many people criticize the eternal burning view of hell because it makes God out to be sadistic and cruel. But which God is actually worse in character, the God held by those who believe in eternal hell, or those who believe God punishes for days, but no longer than a person deserves?

The eternal hell proponents hold this view because they accept a false premise that God created humans in Eden with immortality. When humans sinned they were already immortal and thus could never die, so if they did not return to loyalty, sadly, not at God’s hand, they would suffer eternal torment separate from Him.

But the limited view some holds proposes a god who must perform a miracle in order to inflict proscribed amounts of torment and torture upon intelligent beings before he kills them.

What is a better view? Seeing God’s law as the design protocols upon which life is constructed to operate. Deviate from these and one punishes oneself and the punishment is according to their deeds.

- The smoker with COPD suffers according to their deeds
- The abuser of others experiences hardness of heart, distrust of others, fear, insecurity, has no real peace, constantly worries about exploitation and retribution – they suffer according to their deed.