

# Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible  
Reading ■ Giving Time, Talents & Resources  
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond  
the Church

June 3, 2018

## Day 1: John 6:35

***Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.***

For other “I am” statements see John 8:12,10:7, 11:25,14:6, and 15:1. These statements are the core of Jesus’ self-revelation in John’s Gospel. Jesus communicates who he is by using common symbols of his time. Bread was the basic building block of life. Jesus says unlike the daily bread we need for living, He is the nourishment that we need for life. To believe is to follow. Belief cannot be done sitting or thinking. Jesus called his disciples “followers.”

**Question:** If Jesus is the “bread of life,” how do we eat this bread?

**Challenge:** How do you “follow” Jesus?

**Scripture:** Luke 18:18-23

## Day 2: John 6:36

***But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.***

What the people are seeing is a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. They are seeing what it will be like when God’s rule is experienced by all. All the words, all the healings, all the feedings and all the miracles pointed to a kingdom that will bring joy to all and a kingdom based on love. Jesus showed people what they could have now. He even let them experience it, yet they rejected Him and His message as being unreal.

**Question:** When have you felt God’s presence in your life?

**Challenge:** What convinced you that Jesus was the Son of God and that you should acknowledge Him as Lord?

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 34:1-8 (Moses saw and believed)

## Day 3: John 6:37

***All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.***

Jesus is able to accept people and call them to be greater than they are. At the same time, Jesus confronts us to be who we can be and yet does not drive us away. We may feel discomfort at Jesus’ urging us onward but we always know that we are loved by Him.

**Question:** How can you tell if someone likes you? How can you tell if someone does not like you?

**Challenge:** Have you ever felt challenged by God to do something? How did you feel when you were?

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:25-30

## Day 4: John 6:38

***For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.***

Here Jesus underscores that the Son and the Father are one in purpose. He wants the listeners to know that God wants them to come to Him. This is not the unapproachable God, but the God who is with us and among us. They are to accept a new Lord - Jesus Christ, the one speaking to them.

**Question:** Do you think that God is near, far away, or within? Why?

**Challenge:** Can you say that you are doing the will of God?

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1-21

## Day 5: John 6:39

***And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.***

What a great word of hope - God wants me. In times of great personal distress Martin Luther always pointed to his baptism as proof that God was with him. In the world around us we usually associate great power with being malevolent and yet the greatest power in the universe is benevolent.

**Question:** Is there something you own or some event that you can point to that tells you that you are loved?

**Challenge:** Is it possible for someone with great power to use it for good, and if so how would they make sure they kept doing good?

**Scripture:** John 5:31-47

## Day 6: John 6:40

***For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day***

Salvation is like a present. It is ours but it has to be opened. Nobody takes it away from me but I do not enjoy it or even really have it until I open it. Jesus is telling the people and us that God is willing but we must accept this love freely offered.

**Question:** Do you open presents slowly or quickly? Why?

**Challenge:** If you have a hard time receiving gifts, practice receiving by *not* returning gift for gift but just saying thank you.

**Scripture:** Romans 11:33-36

## of Discipleship

June 10, 2018

### Day 1: Ephesians 2:1-2

***As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.***

There is a force of evil in this world that seeks to lead people through sin to death. The ways we once followed were leading us down a path we thought was correct. In Christ (who is the light of the world) we can now see the right path to take in life.

**Question:** What do you think it means to “follow the ways of the world?”

**Challenge:** Without using the term devil or Satan, how would you explain to someone why there is evil in the world?

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1-24

### Day 2: Ephesians 2:3

***All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.***

“Lived among them” means living in the normal world around us. People are often deceived into thinking the world is naturally good or that people are naturally good. The truth is that evil and sin affect everything around us. A sinful nature is our natural self. This sinful nature does not mean that good things cannot come from the world but it means that evil has an easy time controlling events.

**Question:** What do you believe: are people naturally good and learn to be bad, or are they naturally bad and learn to be good?

**Challenge:** Can you cite reasons for your answer above?

**Scripture:** Romans 1:18-32

### Day 3: Ephesians 2:4-5

***But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.***

It is out of love that God created us in the first place and out of love that God redeemed us. God made us alive - that is God gave us the ability to give life. The grace of God came to us even when we did not ask for it or even want it. God chose us first and we then respond.

**Question:** What makes you feel alive?

**Challenge:** Write about a time you felt most alive. What was happening?

**Scripture:** John 3:17, John 10:10

### Day 4: Ephesians 2:6-7

***And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

God will raise us just as He raised Christ. Not only are we given assurance of eternal life but we have a seat next to God. God does all this so that we can experience the richness of heaven.

Even now on earth we can (in the Church) experience some of the richness to come.

**Question:** If someone could do something kind for you today, what would it be?

**Challenge:** How can the Church enable people to experience the richness of Salvation now?

**Scripture:** 3 John 1:3-8

### Day 5: Ephesians 2: 8-9

***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.***

Salvation is a gift that must be opened to be experienced. It is there in front of us and to open it we need faith, which is the strength to believe that the gift is real. We cannot and have not earned this gift. Our good works will not convince God to save us. It is only God's doing, lest anyone thinks they did it on their own.

**Question:** What gift did you save for last when you opened gifts on Christmas?

**Challenge:** Take the gift of Salvation and accept Jesus Christ as Lord.

**Scripture:** Romans 10:10-13

### Day 6: Ephesians 2:10

***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

This verse is directed to Christians. What God creates is good (Genesis 1:31). God did create us to do good things but doing good things is not what saves us, it is only the love of God. We must keep in mind that the really good works are helping people become connected to God in Christ.

**Question:** How did you become aware that there was a God? How did you come to believe Jesus was God's Son?

**Challenge:** What could you do to bring someone into a relationship with God in Christ?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:12-15

# of Discipleship

June 17, 2018

## Day 1: Genesis 1:1

***In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,***

God existed before the heavens and earth were created. Eternity is a term used to describe a state of timelessness. Eternity is a condition where there is no beginning or end. Eternity can be thought of as outside of time. God existing outside of time helps us to understand why it is difficult to talk about God communicating with people. We exist in time and God exists outside of time.

**Question:** One of the questions not often asked about creation is: why would God do such a thing?

**Challenge:** Try to describe what was before the "beginning."

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 4:27-37

## Day 2: Genesis 1:2

***the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.***

The first chapter in Genesis describes how God brings order out of chaos. Our God does not want chaos to be the Creation. When there is chaos people do not thrive. We can exist but to thrive we need order. Both humans and the rest of creation are very adaptable but we cannot live in a world constantly physically changing. Do you recall when Lava lamps were popular? Can you imagine living in a world where the land was constantly changing like a Lava lamp? When change comes to establish and encourage chaos it is not God at work. When change brings more order and thereby helps us thrive, then it is God at work.

**Question:** What do you think it means that the earth was formless?

**Challenge:** Think of a time in your life when chaos was in control. How did you bring order out of that chaos?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:21-31

## Day 3: Genesis 1:3-5

***Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.***

Too many people find fault with the Genesis account of creation because they take the word day as a 24 hour day. Before God creates time, God calls into being hope and salvation. Light is a symbol of hope and salvation and God creates light and calls it good because with each dayspring (dawn), humanity can be reminded that the Son has risen to give us hope and salvation.

**Question:** Jewish people have Sabbath beginning at sundown on Friday and ending at sundown on Saturday - why?

**Challenge:** See if it is possible to find a totally dark place and see how long you can stand being there.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 45:5-12

## Day 4: Genesis 1:6

***And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.***

Created order continues with the separation of the earth and heavens. The writer, not knowing that space is as large as it is, uses the word dome to describe the separation. Water adds to the images of hope and salvation by adding forgiveness. Water is used to cleanse our bodies and symbolically cleanse our spirits. All the water that God created is still here. Just as the dawn with its light reminds us of hope, flowing water reminds us that God will refresh us and give us our physical needs.

**Question:** Does this imply that at one time everything was water?

**Challenge:** If there is no real "dome" separating earth and heaven and heaven is where God dwells - how would you describe how they are separated?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-10

## Day 5: Genesis 1:7-8

***So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.***

God names the elements of creation *after* they come into being. It is almost as if God wanted to see what the thing looked like before giving it a name. Naming something entails knowledge and a relationship with the item named. God, by naming, declares control of and responsibility for the earth and heavens. The theme of controlling the earth and heavens is repeated countless times in the Old Testament. At the end of the creation account (Genesis 2:20) God gave to Adam the privilege of naming the birds and animals. By bestowing this privilege and power humanity has, with God, the responsibility for the care of creation. Our current concern for the earth is not grounded in "it's the right thing to do" but in creation itself and God's commands regarding our responsibility for creation.

**Question:** Does naming something give you control over it? If not, why do people want something named after them?

**Challenge:** How can we use the creation story to take care of the pollution problem?

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:4-20

## Day 6: Genesis 1:9-10

***And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.***

God, by calling it good says that the created world will sustain life and also allow life to thrive on this earth. Even though humanity's disobedience caused creation to move toward chaos, God still maintains that creation is good. We today find both great happiness and sadness in this world. What God gives us each day is possibilities, not guarantees.

**Question:** Do we have enough land to feed ourselves? Why do you think so and how many do you think we can feed?

**Challenge:** Begin each day with a simple prayer - God thank you for the new day with its possibilities. Help me to see what is possible and act on that possibility.

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:11-20, John 1:1-18

# Marks

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## of Discipleship

June 24, 2018

### Day 1: Exodus 3:1-3

**Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.**

Moses notices that God is calling. Moses has been prepared (by his life experiences and his willingness) to receive God's summons. The angel never says anything but stands by while God speaks. Moses has spent a number of years learning how to be a husband, father, shepherd, and to work for someone else. He is now ready, after learning all those things, to be a leader of people seeking freedom.

**Question:** Why is God on a mountain?

**Challenge:** Can you look back and recall when you have had an experience of seeing an image of God?

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 3:1-21, Isaiah 6

### Day 2: Exodus 3:4-6

**When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.**

God spoke to summon Moses and God speaks to alert him that he is on holy ground - ground that is totally filled with the presence of God. In this passage the removal of sandals removes any separation between God and Moses. The voice from the burning bush now identifies who is talking to Moses by stating the history of God's involvement with the people of Abraham. God has been with Moses' family for many generations. Even though there have been a number of years when no one has been receiving God's words still God has remained faithful to his promise to be with the children of Abraham (Genesis 17:6-7).

**Question:** What made the ground holy?

**Challenge:** Think of some reasons why a person would be afraid to look directly at the face of God.

**Scripture:** Joshua 5:13-15, Ruth 4:2-12, Deuteronomy 25:5-10

### Day 3: Exodus 3:7-8

**Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.**

The Lord has seen, has heard, and has known. The Lord has come down is a way of saying that God is now coming to the people and taking a hand in alleviating their suffering. The land of milk and honey is one where both farmers and shepherds can live. Just as in creation God provided the whole world for plants, animals, and people to live, so now God is promising them a land where they can grow and live freely.

**Question:** Why, if God has seen the people suffering, has God not done something sooner?

**Challenge:** The words "a land flowing with milk and honey" were hopeful to those in bondage.

What words of hope would you offer to persons in bondage to some affliction today?

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 26:4-14

### Day 4: Exodus 3:9-12

**The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'**

Moses receives the bad news that he is the one to act for God to free the people. Moses has five reasons for not sending him to do this task. He, like us, feels unprepared to do a task in God's name. Even though we know that whatever we do in Jesus' name will succeed still we are concerned that maybe we are not up to the task. Just as Moses snatched the daughters from the shepherds so God will snatch Israel from slavery. Reason 1, "who am I?" God does not answer but simply says I am with you and by implication if God is with us who could be against us.

**Question:** Moses asks God to reconsider sending him. Did Jesus ever ask God to reconsider what God was asking of Him?

**Challenge:** When have you felt not up to a task you needed to do?

**Scripture:** Judges 6:11-24

### Day 5: Exodus 3:13-14

**But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you."'**

Reason 2, "who are you?" God says I will be who I will be or I am the one who created life and gave it to all creatures. I am the one who has loved you even when you did not realize or appreciate it. Reason 3 is the fear that he will be rejected just as he was rejected by the two Hebrews he tried to help after he killed the Egyptian. God gives him the strategy to talk to both the Egyptians and Israelites. First talk to the elders. Then confront the King and lastly use the power God gives you to demonstrate God's determination to free the people.

**Question:** Why talk to the elders of the tribes first?

**Challenge:** What is the reason Moses is to give Pharaoh to let the people go and do?

**Scripture:** Exodus 5:1-9

### Day 6: Exodus 4:10-14

**But Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.'**

Reason 4 and 5 have to do with public speaking. Moses says he cannot talk well and God says it's not you talking but me talking through you. Moses says his speech is halting and not good and God (now irritated) tells him that his brother Aaron will speak for him. This marks a change in the way God will communicate; giving the power for doing God's work to more than one person. Up to this point God has worked with one person at a time. From now on there'll be teams of people that have the power to do God's work. This extends all the way to the New Testament when Jesus sent disciples out two by two. In the 21st century when we want to begin a new faith community we send a team of people to begin the work, not just one person.

**Question:** Why does Moses say he is slow of tongue? Do you think he gets nervous or does he have a speech problem?

**Challenge:** What reasons have you given to God for not taking up a task in Jesus' name?

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

