

Marks of Discipleship

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

July 1, 2018

Day 1: I Timothy 4:11-12

These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

In Paul's world, age was a mark of wisdom and one who was young was generally not thought of as being able to teach. Timothy will be listened to because his speech is free from manipulation. The way he goes about his daily activities is an example of Christ's teaching. He demonstrates love and faith by the way he speaks, with authority and humility. He keeps himself wholly devoted to God. Timothy is asked to win the peoples' respect, not by skillful speaking but by correct action. This kind of example is hard to ignore.

Question: Do you think wisdom comes with age or can it be learned?

Challenge: Think of the people you respect; how did they win your respect?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:1-11

Day 2: I Timothy 4:13

Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.

Paul is coming to where Timothy is at, and he wants Timothy to continue to lead public worship. The scripture that was most often read in the early churches was the Prophets and the Psalms. The early church saw in them (the Prophets and the Psalms) predictions of the coming of the Lord. Exhortation was encouraging the congregation to live according to the teaching of Christ. The teaching was the content of the faith.

Question: Do you think Paul is describing worship or some other gathering?

Challenge: If someone came to you and asked you to teach them three basic beliefs of the Christian faith, how would you answer?

Scripture: Proverbs 1:3-13

Day 3: I Timothy 4:14

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.

Timothy has the spiritual gift of Prophecy. Prophecy in the Old Testament was "speaking the Word of God." Prophecy in the first century was considered speaking the Word of God, with the difference being that the Word was the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Timothy had the ability to communicate the Gospel message very clearly. His gift was acknowledged by the elders in the church with the laying on of hands.

Question: Read the passage below (note verse 6 - husband of one wife). Why or why not do you think we should apply this qualification to today's church?

Challenge: Do you have the qualifications of an elder?

Scripture: Titus 1:1-8

Day 4: I Timothy 4:15

Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.

Timothy is to put into practice all the things Paul talks about in verses 11-14. The gift that is not used will wither. It is like a muscle that is not used - it will lose its strength. As Timothy uses his gift, how well others understand his teaching will demonstrate he has the spiritual gift of teaching. People will respond to his teaching and preaching, but unlike healing or speaking in tongues, the affects of the gift may not be seen for a while. So Timothy must make progress by using and perfecting his gift.

Question: Do you believe if you do not use it you will lose it, or do you think some things one never losses proficiency at?

Challenge: What spiritual disciplines do you practice on a regular basis? Worship - Bible Reading - Service - Spiritual Friends - Prayer - Giving?

Scripture: John 15:1-11

Day 5: I Timothy 4:16

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Teaching is a spiritual gift that does not bear fruit for some time. Until the student must use what is taught, can the teaching be said to have had effect? All of the teaching of the Christian view of life, death, and the meaning of life is not appreciated until someone has to use that teaching to deal with a problem. The teachers taught the beliefs, but until someone used those beliefs the teaching was not seen to be effective.

Question: What does Paul mean by *saving* ourselves as well as others by our teaching?

Challenge: What is the best way to "teach" someone a lesson?

Scripture: Mark 1:17-27

Day 6: I Timothy 5:1-2

Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters—with absolute purity.

Timothy is asked to "honor" his elders. He is to act with all the respect the elders are due. Timothy is to take seriously the experience and wisdom of his elders (men and women) so he can demonstrate that the new faith does not ignore the commandments given to Moses. The early Christians were not to disregard the law or throw it out, but to understand its place in God's plan of redemption.

Question: Do you take seriously your elders in life?

Challenge: How are you taking seriously those who are elders?

Scripture: I Peter 5:1-6

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July 8, 2018

Day 1: I John 1:1

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

Our writer is not sharing hearsay but knowledge. His witness comes from personal experience. He has heard, seen, and touched the Lord. He proclaims the “Word” of life because of something he has experienced. First we experience the love of God, then we witness to others what we have heard, seen, and felt.

Question: What way do you learn the best ... hearing, seeing, or doing?

Challenge: Share with someone when it was that you first felt God’s presence.

Scripture: I Peter 1:6-9

Day 2: I John 1:2

The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

The writer and others of his group were able to recognize that the Lord had come. These people who actually saw Jesus were already believers in God. Someone had told them that God existed and would some day come to them. They had to be ready to “see” God. God does not always appear the way we expect. We can be ready through prayer and Bible study to recognize God when he appears among us.

Question: How would you recognize God in the world around us?

Challenge: Keep a journal for a week and mark down where you see God’s presence in your daily life.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:27-31

Day 3: I John 1:3

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

The reason for sharing the experience of God’s love is so that others can experience it too. ***Fellowship is the sharing with another in a common endeavor.*** Peter and James were in fellowship in their father’s fishing business. We want others to share in the fellowship we have with God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ.

Question: Using the definition of fellowship above, who do you have fellowship with?

Challenge: Think about how you are in fellowship with Jesus.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Day 4: I John 1:4

We write this to make our joy complete.

The joy of salvation is made complete when we see others come to God. There is something about the nature of the Christian story that is not fully felt until it is shared. Good news is better news when it is shared.

Question: What was the last piece of good news you received that you had to share?

Challenge: How did you feel when someone you knew accepted Christ?

Scripture: John 15:1-15

Day 5: I John 1:5

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

The image of God as light is found 19 times in the Gospel of John. The light shines in the dark places in people’s lives. Jesus was alone so that we would never be alone. Jesus spent time in darkness so that we might be in the light. Jesus spent time in death so that we might have life.

Question: When were you in darkness?

Challenge: Write a short paragraph to describe darkness.

Scripture: John 1:1-10

Day 6: I John 1:1-5

The opening section to this book reminds us of both Genesis 1 and John 1. In Genesis 1, God creates life and in John 1, God comes to give life again in the redemption offered by His son. The divine Word creates, redeems, and sustains us unto eternal life with Jesus and all those who have gone before.

Question: Read Genesis 1 and answer this question ... what material did God use to create the universe?

Challenge: Read John 1 and rewrite it in your own words.

Scripture: I John 1:1-10

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July 15, 2018

Day 1: Acts 1:1-2

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Acts is part two of Luke's account of God's acts in history. The Christian movement is not just another worldly belief system. It is a belief system that holds this world as God's creation. God loved the world. He sent Jesus (God's son) to come in the flesh and left us with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit led the early followers to bring the Good News of God's redemption to the ends of the earth. Acts ends in Rome - which was the center of the world at that time.

Question: Why do you think that Luke wrote to Theophilus? Is this a person or someone made up?

Challenge: What instructions did Jesus give? How are we doing following them?

Scripture: Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-11

Day 2: Acts 1:3

After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

There was a movie a while back called *Avatar*. Part of the story involved recognizing someone when their person or spirit looked very different than their body. If someone's body changes a lot from a time when we knew them before, we recognize them now by how they act and what they do. Jesus had a new body and it was hard to believe that Jesus was alive again, but to make it harder, he did not look the same. Jesus had to do some things to show He was alive. He ate and spoke of some things that let His followers know that it was Him. The Disciples who were at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-7) had seen this new body but the others had not. Jesus needed the women and the 12 to know that it was Him so that they could with confidence share the experience with others.

Question: Think about Jesus' suffering - what do you think hurt the most?

Challenge: What other Biblical events took place over a period of 40 something?

Scripture: John 1:1-14

Day 3: Acts 1:4-5

While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

Water is a scared element because all the water that God created is still here. We are born in water and even though we live in air – without water we will not survive. When someone is baptized today we make sure we (or the baby) are very clean. Though this is good manners it does not communicate the meaning of washing very well. In a sense we ought to come to the baptism very dirty and allow the water (and maybe soap) to change us from dirty to clean. When we wash we go from one state to another. When we are baptized by the Holy Spirit we also go from one state to another. We become part of a priesthood that communicates God's love to the world.

Question: How did John baptize? The Bible's information is a little scant but what "order of worship" did John use?

Challenge: What do you think it means to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?

Scripture: Luke 24:36-53

Day 4: Acts 1:6-8

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

Verse 6 echoes the petition in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10) that the time of God's reign on earth would begin. The answer given to the Disciples' question, though true, is not very satisfying. If we take up our time wondering and doing calculations about when the new age will come in fullness then we will not get to work on the present age. The early Christians did not believe this world was evil. They believed that evil existed and that it was a powerful influence on the world. However they knew that God created life and God created us to look after creation. The early Christians did not give up the world to the forces of evil and retreat to an "otherworldly" escapism.

Question: How did they know the Holy Spirit came upon them? Acts 2:4

Challenge: What language do you think speaks the best for telling people about Jesus?

Scripture: II Samuel 7:12-29

Day 5: Acts 1:9-10

When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.

Jesus needed to return to God because he did not belong to this world. He needed to return to God in heaven so that we would continue His work of healing, teaching and preaching.

Question: Where else do two in white show up in the Gospel story?

Challenge: The Greeks believed that the gods lived on Mt. Olympus. Why didn't Jesus just go to some mountain where we could consult him from time to time?

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36

Day 6: Acts 1:11

They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

The angels are telling us not to worry about when God will return but to get to work in the world. John Wesley (founder of Methodism) gave us good advice - Work with the Word in the World. We are redeemed by Jesus Christ not to sit and take it all in but to accept and give God's love to the world.

Question: Do you think that Jesus' return will happen in modern Israel? Why or why not?

Challenge: What do you think we ought to be doing while we wait for the Kingdom to come in fullness?

Scripture: Daniel 7:9-28

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July 22, 2018

Day 1: 1Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul's letter shows his great affection for the congregation at Philippi. He knows and has experienced the congregation's ability to care for each other. He urges them to stand firm in that caring by helping Euodia & Syntyche two of the leaders of the believers at Philippi. In addition to not let anything come in the way of their care for each other.

Question: What kind of help do you think Paul has in mind for the two women?

Challenge: Think back to a time when you had to mediate between two persons. How did you do it?

Scripture: Matthew 12.13-23

Day 2: Philippians 4.4-5

4 rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Demonstrate how happy you are that Jesus is your Lord. The one you call lord is benevolent. This means that this lord will give and not take from your life. This lord will not be at ease while you toil. This lord will not say "so what" when you suffer. This Lord will give you eternal life now and forever. Because Jesus is our Lord then we can be kind and gentle to everyone because our Lord is always near to encourage us.

Question: Is the phrase "the Lord is near" used to encourage the Philippians? If so how?

Challenge: How can a person in a practical way follow Paul's request that we rejoice in the Lord always?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 16.6-16

Day 3: Philippians 4

6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Paul tells us not to be anxious about things that might happen to us that are unpleasant. We are not to spend our lives trying to avoid problems and risky events. We need to be careful but we cannot walk around on eggshells. Life has with it the chance of pain but it also has great possibilities for enjoyment. Paul is not saying that we can pray and our troubles will go away; however, by letting our request be known to God we can then listen to how God will help us.

Question: What is supplication?

Challenge: List a few things that you worry about. Make an effort each day to pray that God will help you overcome that worry.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1.16-2.6

Day 4: Philippians 4.7

7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

The peace of God is a state of mental calm and serenity. This peace will guard our whole being from the power of evil and death. Pain and death's real power comes from the fear they cause. Peace from God is a state of mind that allows God's assurance to fill us with calm. Real peace is knowing that God will be with us, even in our pain or death.

Question: How does being a Christian protect us from the fear of death?

Challenge: Think back on your life to two or three times where God has given you assurance of God's presence in your life.

Scripture: Ezekiel 37.1-28

Day 5: Philippians 4.8

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things

Paul is saying that there is something more important than the list above (honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, worthy of praise) that is the peace of God. The life we have in Christ is more fulfilling than anything else in all creation. Events will come and go. People will be born and die. Life will go on with or without us. Change will surely come but our God is forever. God created us and by His creation has obligated Himself to care for us.

Question: When he says "think about these things" does he mean the list before in the verse or something else in the passage?

Challenge: Think about your biggest worry then ask god to help you to deal with that worry and not allow it to derail your life.

Scripture: I Corinthians 13

Day 6: Philippians 4

9Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

As we match our beliefs with our behavior and demonstrate the values our Lord taught, we develop a greater faith and this greater faith assures us of God' love. It is because we do not act like redeemed people that we come to doubt that God is and is the creator of the entire world and that this creator will redeem all creation.

Question: What do you think are the things people fear about death?

Challenge: What things do people see in you that are examples of your life changes by Jesus?

Scripture: I Corinthians 15

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July 29, 2018

Day 1: Matthew 28:9-10

Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

The words "do not be afraid" have come from God's messengers throughout the scriptures. The angel tells Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary for his wife (Matthew 1:20). The resurrected Christ tells the Marys not to be afraid as the resurrected Christ appears different than the Jesus they saw go to the cross. The Jesus they see is more like His appearance at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-7). The disciples will end up in Jerusalem but Jesus wants to give them their instructions for the future in a place outside of their ministry area.

Question: If you felt God speaking directly to you would you be afraid, amazed, filled with wonder, or what?

Challenge: Plan some kind of retreat for yourself. Go somewhere out of town and think about what God's will for you right now really is. Then plan out how you can follow that will.

Scripture: Acts 1:1-14

Day 2: Matthew 28:16

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

Can you imagine the conversation that took place to convince the eleven to go to Galilee? It was Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus who were given the task of telling the disciples to go to Galilee. The mount they went to could have been: Mt. Tabor (south and east of Lake Galilee), Mt. Harmon (north and west of Lake Galilee), or the Mt. of Beatitudes (just beside Lake Galilee). No one knows exactly where Jesus spoke to them but these three spots were places Jesus had been with them before.

Question: What did they say to convince the eleven to go?

Challenge: What is the best place for you to go to hear the voice of God?

Scripture: Luke 24:36-53

Day 3: Matthew 28:17

When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

Another translation of "some doubted" is "they doubted." Doubt, here, is not a theoretical skepticism but the wavering of someone who must decide between two possibilities, both of which seem reasonable and right. In the calling of those in the Old and New Testaments, hesitancy, fear or unbelief is often the response to the call. It is not that some believed and some did not but that all worshiped in spite of their doubts. Our sense of doubt is incorporated into our worship. We do not come to worship with a cocksure attitude that nothing can harm us but we come as humble persons with a little faith asking God to increase our faith.

Question: Up to this point the disciples did not worship Jesus (just followed Him). What caused them to switch to worship?

Challenge: Think about your prayer life. When you are in distress what are your feelings and thoughts about God and the answers you receive?

Scripture: Mark 16:9-20

Day 4: Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Up to this point all that has been written before in the Gospels is a demonstration of the truth of Jesus' saying. Jesus demonstrates He has the power of God in all areas of creation. His resurrection demonstrated that He had power to not just bring a dead body back to life (one that will die again like Lazarus) but to give one a new body that will never die and one that is fit to be with all others in heaven.

Question: Using your knowledge of the Gospel, what would make the disciples believe what Jesus was telling them?

Challenge: What would authority in heaven mean? Authority over what?

Scripture: John 20:19-29

Day 5: Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

After the resurrection the task of being a disciple is not just for the eleven but for all who take the name of Jesus. In the previous missionary command (see Matthew 10:5-6) the disciples were told to go just to the house of Israel. Now they are told to go to the nations - the gentiles. This new mission replaces the earlier one. The mission is to make faithful disciples, not just converts. Jesus is calling us to think not just about conversions but to follow through and bring the convert to full discipleship. Jesus is calling us to train new believers to share God's love with the whole world. Jesus gives to the eleven authority to Baptize - to incorporate persons into the church and to make them disciples.

Question: How long was this process of making all nations disciples supposed to take?

Challenge: If you are not ordained how you can follow the above direction?

Scripture: John 21:1-14

Day 6: Matthew 28:20

and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

The eleven now are given authority to teach so that they could follow through on Jesus' command to make faithful disciples of all nations. Jesus does not tell them to do something without giving the skills and authority to do the task. Today God does not call us to a task that we are not equipped to accomplish. God will provide the skills we need even if the skills are in another person. We have been given the authority and the responsibility to preach, baptize and teach to all the nations that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth and we are given new life through Him.

Question: How long do you think the "age" will last?

Challenge: What are the four most important things to know about the Christian faith and how would you teach them?

Scripture: Acts 10