

# Marks of Discipleship

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

February 3, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 1:15

***In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said,***

This event takes place soon after the Ascension. Each day the Disciples would go to the Temple Mount and preach. Over time the number began to grow. Peter was the leader in the small community even though he had denied knowing Jesus the night of His arrest. God will constantly pick those for leadership who seem unlikely. God wants individuals who are humble, willing to learn and to grow in their spiritual life to be the leaders in the Church.

**Question:** Who do you think is a real humble person?

**Challenge:** To be a leader in the Church what qualities and skills do you think a person needs, and are the skills more important than the qualities?

**Scripture:** Acts 1:15-26

## Day 2: Acts 1:16-17

***"Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry***

The scripture referred to is both Psalm 69:25 and 109:8. Judas had been with the 12 for most of Jesus' ministry. It is believed that Judas was the treasurer of the group (see John 13:29). The Church has believed from its earliest days that the birth, suffering and death of Jesus is foretold in the Old Testament. The content of the early sermons would point out this fact. It was believed that the number 12 was important to keep. Judas, even though he betrayed Jesus, was still a witness to the resurrection. Peter asks that another be chosen to fill up the number 12.

**Question:** What do you think of this use of scripture?

**Challenge:** Why do you think Judas betrayed Jesus?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:6-7 and 53

## Day 3: Acts 1:21-22

***So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us--one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."***

The requirements for someone to be chosen were that they had accompanied Jesus and actually witnessed the Risen Christ. We know that there were a number of individuals that saw Jesus after the Resurrection (See I Corinthians 15:1-8). We may wonder how it is possible to be a modern day disciple because it is 2,000 years since the Resurrection. When we confess our sins and accept Christ as Lord we have an experience of forgiveness and new connectedness to God. It is the Holy Spirit that bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God. We now have "witnessed" the risen Christ in our life and will continue to experience the new life God gives us as we journey in faith.

**Question:** When have you experienced God in your life?

**Challenge:** Do you think there should be requirements for someone to join the church? Why or why not?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:1-11

## Day 4: Acts 1:23

***And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsab'bas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi'as.***

Both of these men fit the requirements and already demonstrated some ability at speaking and teaching. The point of selecting these two was not to say they were the best in the community but that they were the ones with the skills to do the job that was at hand - being an apostle. There were many other tasks that were needed in the Church that others were to fulfill. Each ministry, no matter how small it may seem is great when done in Jesus name.

**Question:** What is your greatest and least talent?

**Challenge:** Ask God to show you how you might use your talents in service. In addition, try to pray before you do something, to dedicate your task to God.

**Scripture:** I Corinthians 12:1-26

## Day 5: Acts 1:24-25

***Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs."***

The way the early Church made important decisions was to invite God into the discussion by asking the Holy Spirit to be a guide in the decision.. We today have two tools, prayer and the Bible. We believe that by prayer we have the Holy Spirit to guide us to the right decision. We pray not only for guidance but to have our own needs recede into the background. The Bible can be God speaking to us if we are willing to listen. Finally it is the community praying and reading that can make the important decisions.

**Question:** The statement "the Lord knows everybody's heart," does it comfort you, scare you, or what?

**Challenge:** What have you been chosen to do in Christian ministry?

**Scripture:** John 15:9-17

## Day 6: Acts 1:26

***And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthi'as; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.***

An interesting way to choose - let God do it. In the early Church they did not elect but put forth names of the qualified and then prayed and let God choose. In order for this to work we need to put aside our own options and let God speak.

**Question:** Would you like to select our leaders this way (casting lots)?

**Challenge:** Devise a way for it to be possible to select church leaders using this method.

**Scripture:** Acts 1:15-26

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February 10, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 2:1

**When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.**

This day is considered by many to be the birthday of the Church. The promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. The experience of the Spirit's coming was hard to explain. So Luke used an image from Genesis (Genesis 1:2) of the Spirit as the wind. The Hebrew word that is used in Genesis 1:2 means wind. In a commentary on this verse the author said "the Spirit of God blows and it only stops when we get in the way". We too often let our own ideas and plans get in the way of the Spirit working. Instead of putting up a barrier we need to find ways that we can help focus the Spirit's power, or sometimes just get out of the way.

**Question:** What birthday party do you recall being the happiest? What made it so good?

**Challenge:** If you could not use the image of the wind, how would you describe the coming of the Spirit?

**Scripture:** Acts 2:1-11

## Day 2: Acts 2:3-4

**And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

Luke uses an image drawn for the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:6). The power of fire is not just in its ability to destroy things but also in its cleansing ability. Fire is used to refine and purify. The image of the Spirit first as wind, now fire, helps us to understand that the event of Pentecost is from God. The Apostles were speaking the Word of God just like the prophets of old.

**Question:** Do you enjoy a fire, either indoors or outdoors, and why?

**Challenge:** Again, if you could not use the image of fire, how would you describe the Spirit landing on the Apostles?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:1-13

## Day 3: Acts 2:5-6

**Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.**

Pentecost takes place during one of the Jewish holidays. This holiday brought Jews from all over the world to Jerusalem. The Apostles were probably speaking on or near the Temple mount, where there was enough space for a large crowd to gather. It is likely that even though the crowd knew a few languages they were surprised that the Apostles were speaking in their own language. This tells us that we must speak the language that people in our day really understand.

**Question:** What is your favorite religious holiday and why?

**Challenge:** Try watching a program in a different language. Note how much you understood and how much effort it took to understand. Would you like to do this every week?

**Scripture:** John 3:1-17

## Day 4: Acts 2:7-8, 12

**And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God. ... And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"**

Today people are surprised and grateful when we try to make the Gospel understood in their own language. I am not just speaking of the known languages of the world but the language of a new generation. The Church has learned that for our country, just speaking English is not enough. We need to present the Gospel with word, images, and song. When we make an honest attempt to "speak" in the language that people can understand, we will find people responding.

**Question:** How do you think the listeners knew these folks were Galileans?

**Challenge:** Think this week about how you learn? Do you learn new things better by reading, listening, watching, doing or some combination?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:8-17

## Day 5: Acts 2:14, 16-18

**But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem. ... but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.'**

The good news for our time is that God has given the message of salvation and the ability to deliver it to anyone who is willing to receive the Spirit. It will not be a few who will have the Spirit but all people can proclaim the Word of God - the good news to this generation. We need only become willing and God will pour out the Spirit.

**Question:** Have you ever spoken to a group or given a speech? What was it like?

**Challenge:** Write a 5 minute sermon.

**Scripture:** Joel 2:28-32

## Day 6: Acts 2:21

**And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

The reason for all people to proclaim the word of God is so that everybody can call upon the name of the Lord. Nobody can call on the Lord if they do not know that the Lord is first, there, and second, that the Lord will listen. The promise of God is valid, it just needs to be shared.

**Question:** What would be good news for you right now?

**Challenge:** Think of someone else and try to first think of what good news would be for them, then try to give it to them.

**Scripture:** Acts 2:1-21

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February 17, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 2:22-24

***"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know-- this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."***

This message is addressed to the world. The Jews that were in Jerusalem were from all over the Roman world. The wonders and signs done by Jesus were actually seen by some of them but they refused to believe. In today's world there are still many signs that God is present but still people refuse to see them. It is our prayer that God will open the eyes of all around to see the mighty works of God. God is not unwilling to do great things but we are unwilling to see them.

**Question:** Can you remember (without looking at Luke) 3 to 4 mighty works that Jesus did?

**Challenge:** Do some research in Luke to see who actually crucified Jesus and who brought the charges against Him?

**Scripture:** Acts 2:22-41

## Day 2: Acts 2:32-33

***This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear."***

The message of Good News and the messenger were the same. The only way to fully communicate to people was through a person. This Jesus not only taught and did wondrous signs but also defeated death. The resurrection was witnessed by many but the evidence that was being witnessed by the crowd was the Holy Spirit (that part of God that is present in the world after Jesus left). People can, over time, forget the historical Jesus but the Holy Spirit cannot be forgotten because of the continuing signs that are done through the Spirit.

**Question:** Which one of the Disciples actually saw the Resurrection (Luke 24:1-12)?

**Challenge:** On Pentecost what was the effect of the Holy Spirit that Peter is referring to? (Acts 2:1-12)

**Scripture:** Mark 1:1-8

## Day 3: Acts 2:36

***Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."***

"God made him Lord" means Jesus rules as David ruled over Israel. The term "Christ" referred to Jesus being the one who can save the people from their sins. Peter shows that the people did not recognize who Jesus was and therefore killed Him. This theme of not recognizing Jesus was present during His life and still today (He came unto His own and His own did not recognize Him - John 1:11).

**Question:** What do you think the difference is between Lord and Christ and Jesus?

**Challenge:** What do you think of the statement found in John 11:49-50? Is your opinion different if it is someone else besides Jesus?

**Scripture:** Luke 23:1-49

## Day 4: Acts 2:37

***Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"***

Those listening to Peter's message saw that they did something very wrong and were now afraid of the consequences. Today we need to hear that we have sinned and that by not accepting Jesus as Lord (remaining neutral) we are again denying Him and rejecting Him. What we do today that is wrong is that we stay neutral and think everything is OK. The Bible teaches that we cannot be neutral; we will either serve God or the powers of evil (Matthew 6:24).

**Question:** What do you think the phrase "cut to the heart" means?

**Challenge:** When was the last time you had to ask the question, "what should I do?"

**Scripture:** Acts 4:5-14

## Day 5: Acts 2:38-39

***And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him."***

The solution to the problem of "what shall we do" is to reject evil by accepting Jesus as Lord. We make a commitment to turn our will and life over to God. We then are forgiven and feel a new connection to God. This new connection to God has benefits not only to the person but to their whole family and future generations. As more and more people accept Christ as Lord the world becomes a better place to live and this helps our children.

**Question:** Have you been Baptized? Do you know when and where and the details of the day?

**Challenge:** How can we tell if someone has received the gift of the Holy Spirit?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:1-13

## Day 6: Acts 2:40-41

***And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."***

The response to the early Christian message was dramatic. A lot of people came to believe and were baptized. This caused the religious rulers of the day to be concerned that their hold on the people would slip. In today's world, revival always caused concern among the established religious bodies but God's Spirit will not be contained. If the current Church is not proclaiming the Word, God will find a way to get the Good News of Christ to the world. We will either help or be in the way and if we are in the way we will be blown down.

**Question:** What is the largest group you were ever in?

**Challenge:** Write down what you think was crooked about the generation.

**Scripture:** Romans 6

# Marks of Discipleship

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February 24, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 2:42

***And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.***

Teaching is explaining either *why we believe* or *what we believe*. The apostles' teaching showed how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament. Fellowship is sharing with another your life. The sharing is more than verbal but actually going through times of joy and sadness together. Breaking of bread refers to eating meals together. It is not communion but the eating of a meal as a community. Prayers are a way of talking about worship. In Jewish tradition worship and prayer were the same thing.

**Question:** How would you define "fellowship?"

**Challenge:** This Sunday see how our worship follows the pattern above and how it does not follow it.

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42-47

## Day 2: Acts 2:43

***And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.***

Signs and wonders are evidence that God approves of something or more often that the message comes from God. The difficulty is figuring out what is a true sign or just someone claiming a natural event is a sign from God. The healing in the first century was a sign that the illness was not a result of sin and therefore not a punishment from God. If a sign or wonder brings about life and demonstrates the love of God then it is from God.

**Question:** Why were they afraid?

**Challenge:** Think of something that used to scare you. How did you get over being scared?

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 32:21

## Day 3: Acts 2:44

***And all who believed were together and had all things in common;***

This early community of Christians in Jerusalem shared all the necessities of life. There were other groups that also did this (military and religious groups) but the Christians shared all things to witness to the love of God. The point is not the sharing but the *why* of the sharing. If we share to show how righteous we are then it would be better to hoard than share. Everything we do in Jesus name must demonstrate the love of God.

**Question:** Do you have some things (material things) in common with someone else?

**Challenge:** Do you approve of sharing everything? Why or why not?

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:7

## Day 4: Acts 2:45

***and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.***

While it is true that the members of this church did not have many possessions, there were some that had a good amount. The giving of all they had was done so that some of them could be about the work of preaching and teaching. As the church grew it was those who were in full time Christian work (Bishops, Priests, Monks and Nuns) who gave up all they had and shared all things in common. There is a story of a Bishop who did not want to be Bishop because he had a lot of wealth. His congregation forced him to take holy orders anyway because he was the most qualified. He became a great leader in the Church but he had to give up all his wealth to the church.

**Question:** What is the biggest donation you have ever given? How did you feel giving it?

**Challenge:** How do we, as a society, try to carry out the above verse?

**Scripture:** Luke 12:22-40

## Day 5: Acts 2:46

***And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,***

The rhythms of life for this community involve daily worship, meals together, and most importantly celebrating their new life in Christ. The phrase "glad and generous hearts" refers to the attitude with which they approached the everyday and dull tasks of living. Everyday eating was changed from a requirement to a celebration. Each day was celebrated in everyday tasks. It was more than being happy. They realized that through the day Christ was with them giving meaning and life to those every day tasks. They witnessed to the love of God in all they did and they did it generously, which meant they did not think they would run out of love.

**Question:** What do you think about going to a worship service every day?

**Challenge:** What does it mean to eat with a glad and generous heart?

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, 9:7-9

## Day 6: Acts 2:47

***praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.***

The result of this sharing of the love of God was that they were admired by all those who did not feel meaning in their life. The people in Jerusalem responded to the good news of Jesus Christ through the words preached and the life lived by the Christians.

**Question:** What do you admire about God?

**Challenge:** How can we as Christians "have favor with all the people?"

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42-47