

# Marks of Discipleship

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

May 5, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 8:9-10

***Now for some time a man named Simon, had practiced magic in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power."***

Simon was a person with a natural talent for slight of hand. He also had the ability to impress a crowd with just his presence. He is a natural actor and performer. The people call him great because he can do things that are not only out of the ordinary, but seem to be supernatural.

**Question:** Who do you consider great?

**Challenge:** How would you define magic?

**Scripture:** Acts 19:13-20

## Day 2: Acts 8:11

***They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic.***

To ascribe divine power to someone who does amazing things is always a mistake. The problem with believing that it is possible to manipulate natural laws by special words or personal power is that we begin to place our faith in something that will ultimately let us down. If we believe that we can hold off illness and death with magic we will chase after smoke and illusion.

**Question:** Can you list at least three things that you consider amazing?

**Challenge:** Learn a magic trick this week and do it for somebody.

**Scripture:** Acts 13:4-13

## Day 3: Acts 8:12

***But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***

Philip is preaching in the same region that Simon has been doing his tricks. Philip's "signs and wonders" were what took place after people believed. Their lives were changed from ones that had little hope to ones that had real hope for the future. Philip's sermon was simple. He told them about Jesus and his Resurrection. He told them entrance into the family of God was not by birth but through belief. Finally, because Philip had such a strong faith others could see that he was changed. The response of the people to Philip's message was a change of life. The response to Simon's magic was amazement.

**Question:** Why do you think the peoples lives were changed because of Philip's preaching?

**Challenge:** What changed in your life when you accepted Christ as Lord?

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 33:1-10

## Day 4: Acts 8:13

***Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.***

Simon is one of the converts! He sees that all of his ability in performing magic cannot bring about new life, however the Gospel can. Simon discovers the difference between performing magic and preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. Simon also discovers the difference between make-believe and what is real. Simon finds that he too needed Jesus in his life just like everyone else. Again, the great signs were the changed lives that followed when people accepted Christ as Lord.

**Question:** What do you remember about your baptism?

**Challenge:** Why do you think we practice Baptism? Hint: read Romans.

**Scripture:** Romans 6:1-13

## Day 5: Acts 8:14-15

***When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,***

In the Biblical tradition laying on of hands was the practical method of both blessing and ordaining. Laying hands on the person was done on their head with prayer and sometimes oil. The Apostles mission to the Samaritan church was to distribute the Holy Spirit among the believers, so that they might be about the missionary activity of the church. As the Church in Jerusalem shared all things, Peter and John went to share the Holy Spirit with this new Church.

**Question:** Do you think Philip minded that Peter and John came and improved on his work?

**Challenge:** What do you think are the gifts of the Spirit?

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

## Day 6: Acts 8:18-20

***When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!"***

Simon's mistake was one of immaturity, not greed. He is often portrayed as someone who is just out for power, but I think this is incorrect. Many new Christians desire to help others and want the power to do so. What many new Christians do not know is that one has to gain some wisdom to know how and when to use the power that God gives. Peter gives a harsh reproof that is meant to warn any others who desire the power of God to use for their own gain.

**Question:** Have you ever tried to buy someone's affection?

**Challenge:** Make a list of things money cannot buy.

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 18:9-14



May 12, 2019

### Day 1: Acts 8:26

**Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."**

If we are willing to serve, God will find ways we can serve. Philip is an example of the Christian that has gifts and is willing to use them. He was picked to be a deacon, to serve at distributing food to the widows, and he finds himself preaching. Philip was chosen to be a deacon because he was of "good stature, full of the spirit and wisdom." He begins his ministry doing one thing, but ends up doing another. In both his serving food and preaching he is doing the same thing – preaching the Gospel.

**Question:** When have you gone on a trip without knowing your exact destination? How did that feel?

**Challenge:** Why do you think God speaks (most of the time) through angels instead of with God's own voice?

**Scripture:** Acts 8:26-40

### Day 2: Acts 8:27-28

**So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.**

This man was like many in the ancient world; religious but seeking to find meaning in life. The Bible is a source of hope, but they are not sure where to look or how to understand what it means. Many people see the Bible as a sacred book but at the same time it is a mystery that they believe they will never understand. In fact it is true that a number of regular church going folks know little of the riches that are found in the Bible. It is not the fault of people but of us who know the scripture but do not share its contents with others.

**Question:** Do you know what a Eunuch is?

**Challenge:** If you could go to any place where Jesus walked and worshiped, where would it be and why?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:1-12

### Day 3: Acts 8:29-31

**The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.**

A eunuch is not a person that a Jew would normally seek out and talk to. For someone to become a eunuch they have to mutilate their body and Jews took a dim view of any body mutilation. God chose the right person for the job of talking to the eunuch. Philip is a Greek speaking Jew and probably not originally from Jerusalem. He would be more likely to follow God's instruction to talk to the eunuch. Philip recognized the scripture the eunuch was reading and asked his question hoping to learn, as well as share his understanding. Philip is a good evangelist because he is willing to listen to the other person first before sharing. We too often do not give people the chance to share their beliefs before we give them ours. We need to be a good listener as well as a speaker.

**Question:** Have you ever seen anybody reading the Bible in public in the same way people might read a novel?

**Challenge:** Read Isaiah 53. Do you think it is talking about Jesus?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:13-21

### Day 4: Acts 8:35-36

**Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"**

If we are willing to share the love of God we have experienced then God will bring individuals into our lives that need to experience God's love. Philip does not know why he is going south but just goes, knowing only that God has something in mind. His experience is more like what might happen to any Christian today. Philip has not prepared a sermon for a large congregation but is simply ready to give an answer for the reason he has hope. Notice that Philip starts with the scripture.

**Question:** If you were choosing how you wanted to be baptized what would you choose and why? Total immersion, pouring or sprinkling? Would you like to be baptized in a river or lake instead of in a church?

**Challenge:** What should be required before someone is baptized?

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:1-6

### Day 5: Acts 8:38-39

**And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.**

After the eunuch has stated that he believes and is willing to be a follower himself he wants to make a public declaration of his faith. When one is baptized, one is buried with Christ. If we are buried with Christ we shall also rise like Him. This is the promise that was fulfilled and verified by Jesus' resurrection. As far as we know this eunuch does go back to his old job and does not begin a great movement in Ethiopia. It was worth Philips' time for just one person.

**Question:** What kind of public declaration of faith have you made?

**Challenge:** If all the people in a town saw you baptized they would know you were a follower of Jesus. Now how would new people in town know you were a follower?

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:17-20

### Day 6: Acts 8:40

**Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.**

As soon as Philip's work is done he is once again on his way to a new place of ministry. We know of this one person that Philip touched and we do not know of how many others he was able to help understand the significance of Jesus to the world. He was an itinerant minister going from place to place.

**Question:** Do you think you would like to be a traveling preacher?

**Challenge:** Think about someone that you might talk to about the hope that you have in Christ.

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 5:17-25



# Marks of Discipleship

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ships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

May 19, 20109

## Day 1: Acts 9:1-2

**Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.**

Damascus was about 175 miles north of Jerusalem. This would take about five days of heavy travel to make the trip. With the intent to take persons back to Jerusalem, Saul must have had a number of guards traveling with him. In the early days of the church it was referred to as "the Way." This was a descriptive word because Jesus' teachings were more of a **way of living** than a set of doctrines. They were a **way** of living, knowing you are vitally connected to God.

**Question:** What class in school do you (or did you) find most A) enjoyable and B) most helpful?

**Challenge:** Saul was going to arrest people for thinking wrong. Under what circumstances is it OK to arrest individuals for thinking wrong?

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

## Day 2: Acts 9:3-4

**As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"**

There are times in our life when we have a moment of insight. We may not have a full "Damascus Road experience" but we do have the experience of a resolution to an internal conflict or problem that has seemed unsolvable. We have a moment when the answer seems clear and we may say afterwards, "why didn't I think of that before." Notice how the voice equates the ones persecuted (Christians) with himself. The voice affirms a basic Christian belief that we are one with Christ.

**Question:** Have you ever had anything happen to you anywhere close to what happened to Saul?

**Challenge:** What would it take for you to fundamentally change your beliefs?

**Scripture:** Galatians 1:1-2:2

## Day 3: Acts 9:5

**"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.**

Saul did not know who was talking to him but he knew it was God speaking. Saul calling the voice "Lord" meant that Saul had made a decision that his Lord was not the lifeless Law but the life giving God. He gives up his stubbornness and accepts the love of God. Today many folks are still stubborn and cling to the belief that God is irrelevant to daily life and so ignore God. This ignoring of God can go so far (in some cases) that the person can actually persecute other believers.

**Question:** How do you think Saul knew it was Jesus?

**Challenge:** Develop a message around why Jesus chose to use the words he did.

**Scripture:** Romans 1:1-17

## Day 4: Acts 9:6

**"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."**

Saul receives his first command from God. This began a lifelong habit of following wherever God commanded him to go. He spent his early life doing the opposite of what God wanted and now Saul goes in a new direction. His new path will not be easy but it will be life giving. Remember how Jacob found meaning to life when he went back to make amends with his brother. He spent a night wrestling with God. Jacob came out of that with a hip out of joint and a new life. As long as Jacob followed where God led he felt little pain. Whenever Jacob went against what God wanted he had great pain.

**Question:** How early do you get up in the morning and why?

**Challenge:** When in your life have you felt the leading of God?

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 11:22-33

## Day 5: Acts 9:7

**The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.**

In this case God just wanted Saul to hear the voice. The others knew something had happened but they did know what. It is like Zechariah when God told him that he and his wife were going to have a baby (John the Baptist); he did not believe and he was speechless for nine months. The others did not know what had happened but they knew it was significant. Sometimes God speaks to one person but others know something has happened. At other times God speaks so all can hear, but not often.

**Question:** Why were the men speechless?

**Challenge:** Think of the last time you were speechless. What was happening and how did you regain your speech?

**Scripture:** Daniel 10:10-21

## Day 6: Acts 9:8-9

**Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.**

Saul needed to be blind so that he could not be distracted. He needed to be in prayer without any other outside stimuli. We need to take the time to integrate into our life dramatic experiences. It is not a good idea to rush this integration. Take the time needed to make that experience part of you, especially if the experience is transformative. It takes time to transform our whole past.

**Question:** How long have you gone without eating?

**Challenge:** Try fasting. Try to eat just very small amounts and to pray four times in the day: once in early morning, in mid morning, mid afternoon, and evening.

**Scripture:** Jonah 1:15-2:10



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May 26, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 9:10-11

***In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.***

Ananias responds to God's call with the traditional words "Here am I" Lord. He is responding the way Abraham, Samuel (Genesis 22:1-2, I Samuel 3:4,10) and all those in Israel's past who were called by God. Without knowing what God is asking we need to simply respond by saying "yes." This is true obedience and faith. For in order to simply follow, we must trust that God will never leave us alone (John 14:1-6).

**Question:** What activity are you afraid of? For example: sky diving or bungee jumping or going into a dark building. Why?

**Challenge:** If God asked you to go on a mission trip for three months what would stop you from going?

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

## Day 2: Acts 9:12

***In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."***

It was believed in the ancient world that healing was done by touch. The healer would touch the part of the person that was injured. Today we still find that touch can heal in ways that go beyond a medication. A parent's kiss can stop the pain for a child's hurt knee. A warm embrace can heal the pain of a loss. An extended hand in peace can stop the hurt of war.

**Question:** Why do you think Ananias had to lay hands on the person to restore his sight?

**Challenge:** How could you "lay hands" on someone to help heal them?

**Scripture:** Luke 18:15-17

## Day 3: Acts 9:13-14

***"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."***

The challenge for Ananias was to be able to actually touch Saul, who had brought grief to many Christians. In addition, Ananias had to fear for his life because he did not know if Saul would turn around and arrest him. I recall a man who was an EMT talk about how he was giving mouth to mouth to someone and in the middle of the procedure that person vomited in his mouth. He said he just spit the vomit out, wiped his face and started again. I asked, "How can you do that?" He replied, "Because the person would die if I didn't."

**Question:** Who in our world today has caused the most harm and to whom?

**Challenge:** What would you do to save someone's life?

**Scripture:** Proverbs 29:1-16 especially 2 and 16

## Day 4: Acts 9:15-16

***But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."***

God does not mind us asking real questions. God did not mind that Ananias was nervous or afraid. God wanted him to perform the task and knew that even as Ananias was worried, he was the right person with the right skills. I think what helped Ananias perform the task was that God told him that Saul prayed. He prayed for the first time from the heart - he asked Jesus to forgive him and Saul called Jesus Lord.

**Question:** Be honest - would you help someone who has persecuted and perhaps killed your friends?

**Challenge:** What would it take for you to help someone who has hurt and maybe killed people you care for?

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

## Day 5: Acts 9:17

***Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."***

Saul is healed in the name of Jesus. He regained his sight and from now on would be able to see things about the world that would help us see God through his writings. The persons who were converted under his ministry saw because Saul was blind for a while. It is believed that in later life Saul - Paul suffered from an eye disorder (glaucoma?). He not only received his sight but the Holy Spirit had come upon him to be the constant presence of Jesus. This is still true today. The Holy Spirit is the constant presence of Jesus in our lives. We do not always feel the Spirit but we can feel it often enough to assure us that Jesus is with us. It is in worship and especially at communion that we sense the Spirit

**Question:** What is the first thing you do when you enter someone's home?

**Challenge:** Can you find someone you might help "see" again?

**Scripture:** Acts 2:37-41

## Day 6: Acts 9:18

***Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again.***

God gives us new life and immediately we can see more clearly. The scales that need to fall from our eyes are fear of death, envy of what others have, fear that bad things may happen to us and fear that we may not get "enough" (food, clothes, shelter and love).

**Question:** How long can you stay in total darkness?

**Challenge:** Wear a blind fold and walk around your house. Take it off and walk around your house and see the difference.

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:19-34