

# Marks of Discipleship

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

July 7, 2019

## Day 1: Matthew 6:24

***'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.'***

The terms "love & hate", do not refer to emotions but to choosing. The emphasis is on service, not on feelings. A person can love more than one person but serving is a different matter. Undivided service cannot be given to two masters. Wealth is considered property, which includes land, money, and other goods. Jesus is not allowing for a third choice, which is to serve neither. Jesus assumes we will serve one or the other and they are mutually exclusive so we must choose. It is not explicitly stated but there is an implication that if we do not choose to serve God then we serve property.

**Question:** What do you think -- is it possible to be neutral?

**Challenge:** Take a look at both your date book and your check book to see if you are serving God or property.

**Scripture:** Matthew 12:22-32

## Day 2: Matthew 6:25

***'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?'***

Serving property is not confined to wealthy folks. If anybody begins to fret over what they do not have they are being controlled by it. Not only can property control us but so can our feelings and attitudes. I have seen divorced couples still controlled by the other because they fret over what the other has done to them. Instead of thinking about how little we can live on in retirement we worry about having enough. Jesus never intended for us to starve or go about naked in the cold. Jesus would have us eat, drink and be clothed. Jesus points to the worth of the person as greater than what they have or what they wear.

**Question:** Should we be concerned about time passing us by?

**Challenge:** List in order the things you tend to worry about the most: clothing, food, shelter, retirement, family, getting hurt physically.

**Scripture:** Luke 12:21-31

## Day 3: Matthew 6:26

***Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?'***

Jesus offers us a way to get our thinking back to what is important by reminding us of God's love in creation. God has provided for us what we need in order to survive and even thrive. Jesus reminds

us that the rest of creation does not think or worry about the basics but goes about their lives assuming the food will be there and that they look OK.

**Question:** Think for a bit about the difference between "worry" and normal concern for your wellbeing. What is the difference?

**Challenge:** What behaviors can add to your life? What do you need to start doing and what do you need to stop?

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:1-11

## Day 4: Matthew 6:28-30

***And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?'***

Jesus does not want us to become birds or lilies but to look at how they go about correctly using God's gift of creation. The flowers in creation simply use the earth and water to grow. The animals use what is around them for food and shelter. God has provided for them not only the means to survive but the instinct to not worry and just use what is in creation to live.

**Question:** Does "little faith" mean no faith? Or not enough faith? Or unsure faith?

**Challenge:** Does this verse help you be less anxious about life? If not, why not?

**Scripture:** Philippians 2

## Day 5: Matthew 6:31-32

***Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.'***

Jesus did not intend that we should ignore our intelligence and reasoning when trying to feed and clothe ourselves. Those gifts of thinking and reasoning can be used to provide a living or be used to be anxious. God did not give us the gift of anxiety or worry, we developed that ourselves. We receive relief from worry not by ignoring, it but replacing it with trust that God will provide. Because God has provided the abilities, we need to thrive in this world.

**Question:** Who are the Gentiles?

**Challenge:** Think about what you have eaten this week. Was it enough or too much or too little?

**Scripture:** Psalm 8

## Day 6: Matthew 6:33

***But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'***

Striving or seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven is not intended chronologically, as though we are free to pursue material goods after seeking the Kingdom. Jesus means that we pursue the Kingdom as our one priority and seek it continually. Instead of telling us what not to do Jesus gave us a way to keep from the type of worry that brings anxiety.

**Question:** What do you think God's righteousness is?

**Challenge:** How do you interpret "all these things as well"?

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:7-12

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Beyond the Church

July 14, 2019

## Day 1: Exodus 5:1-2

*Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness."' But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go.'*

Let my people go or send my people? Send my people sounds more like God speaking and demanding action on the part of Pharaoh. This demand from God is the beginning of the "Pharaoh's heart being hardened." Pharaoh's not "knowing" the God of Israel means he does not acknowledge the Lord as an equal, much less a superior, to himself.

**Question:** Why do you think Moses used the ploy of saying the Hebrews wanted to go into the wilderness to worship?

**Challenge:** Have you ever said, "why should I do what God wants?"

**Scripture:** Romans 10

## Day 2: Exodus 5:3-4

*Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has revealed himself to us; let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God, or he will fall upon us with pestilence or sword.' But the king of Egypt said to them, 'Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their work? Get to your labours!'*

Pharaoh could have been afraid of Moses' demand that the people go to the wilderness to worship because either 1) the wilderness is outside of Pharaoh's control or 2) the Hebrews might be rallying for an invasion of Egypt. There is still a memory of an outside army invading and taking over control of much of Egypt a few generations before Moses was born. In much the same way the Islamic group formed an army outside of both Syria's and Iraq's control and has taken over much of both countries.

**Question:** Why didn't Pharaoh have Moses and Aaron done away with?

**Challenge:** What would have been different for both the Egyptians and the Hebrews if Pharaoh had given in to the request?

**Scripture:** Romans 1

## Day 3: Exodus 5:7-9

*'You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, "Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God." Let heavier work be laid on them; then they will labour at it and pay no attention to deceptive words.'*

Pharaoh cannot allow the Hebrews to go worship the Lord without acknowledging that the Hebrews' God is a deity. He shows his disdain and non-fear by imposing harsh requirements on the Hebrews. Pharaoh represents the current culture that imposes harsh requirements on us for success. When we acknowledge God as king then we define success differently. God calls us to be faithful not successful.

**Question:** Why can't bricks be made without straw?

**Challenge:** Can you think of an example of treating people harshly and expecting them to work harder? Does it work?

**Scripture:** Exodus 1:8-22 (Pharaoh dishes out harsh treatment)

## Day 4: Exodus 5:11-14

*Go and get straw yourselves, wherever you can find it; but your work will not be lessened in the least." So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt, to gather stubble for straw. The taskmasters were urgent, saying, 'Complete your work, the same daily assignment as when you were given straw.' And the supervisors of the Israelites, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and were asked, 'Why did you not finish the required quantity of bricks yesterday and today, as you did before?'*

We see the structure of the Egyptian slave system. The Pharaoh gives the orders, the taskmasters are to make sure they are carried out by having supervisors be responsible for the actual work the slaves will do. The taskmasters are most likely Egyptian and the supervisors are most likely Hebrews. The supervisors were in a bad position. They were between the masters and the slaves. They got beaten by the masters and talked about by the slaves. The supervisors paid a high price for being more comfortable than the slaves.

**Question:** Do you think the punishment of gathering the straw themselves lasted a long time or a short time?

**Challenge:** When have you felt in the middle and getting it from both sides?

**Scripture:** I Corinthians 1:18-31

## Day 5: Exodus 5:15-17

*Then the Israelite supervisors came to Pharaoh and cried, 'Why do you treat your servants like this? No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, "Make bricks!" Look how your servants are beaten! You are unjust to your own people.' He said, 'You are lazy, lazy; that is why you say, "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord." As they left Pharaoh, they came upon Moses and Aaron who were waiting to meet them. They said to them, 'The Lord look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odor with Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us*

The Pharaoh had the opinion that if the Hebrews were kept too busy and too tired then they couldn't cause trouble. They still had to make the same quantity of bricks but now they would have to go and find the straw. Pharaoh's words about worship being an excuse for getting out of work is turned on its head in today's culture. People will go to work to get out of paying homage to God. People seem too busy with important things to spend time with God's people in worship - unless of course it is at a time that other things are not happening.

**Question:** Did Moses make life harder for the Hebrews?

**Challenge:** Think of a time in your life when things had to get worse before they got better.

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 11:20-30

## Day 6: Exodus 5:20-22

*Then Moses turned again to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? Since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people.'*

The supervisors had the courage to confront both Pharaoh and Moses because they were committed to fulfill their job of making bricks and they knew it was unfair to ask for the finished product when the workers did not have the raw material. The supervisors understood both the workers and management so earned the right to point out when things were wrong by either party. Their courage came from the conviction that they knew what was right.

**Question:** Is Moses being hard on God?

**Challenge:** When have you asked, "why me?"

**Scripture:** Exodus 6:1-13, 7:1-7

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Church

July 21, 2019

## Day 1: Exodus 7:14-15

**Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh’s heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water; stand by at the river bank to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was turned into a snake.**

In near eastern culture the term *heart* is closer to what we mean today by the word mind. The heart was the source of thinking, reasoning and planning. The heart characterized humans as rational beings that could be taught and learn. The heart was the organ through which one would strive for happiness and a good life. The heart was also used to express what one would call the will of a person. Pharaoh was so stubborn he could not use the natural faculties of his heart to see the truth.

**Question:** Do you think Moses had any idea of what would happen at the river bank?

**Challenge:** In the ancient near east the kidneys were the source of what?

**Scripture:** Genesis 6:1-8, Romans 1

## Day 2: Exodus 7:17-18

**Thus says the Lord, ‘By this you shall know that I am the Lord.’ See, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall be turned to blood. The fish in the river shall die, the river itself shall stink, and the Egyptians shall be unable to drink water from the Nile.”**

The staff turning into a serpent and swallowing the serpents of the Egyptians (see Exodus 7:8-12) is a sign that the well ordered world of the Egyptians is about to be undone. The power of Egypt is no match for God’s creative power. Egypt (and all those who use power to enslave people) will lose that power to those who will use power to give freedom.

**Question:** Why blood?

**Challenge:** Look up why the Nile was so important to the Egyptians.

**Scripture:** Revelation 8:7-12, 9:1-21

## Day 3: Exodus 7:20-21

**Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and of his officials he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the river, and all the water in the river was turned into blood, and the fish in the river died. The river stank so that the Egyptians could not drink its water, and there was blood throughout the whole land of Egypt.**

The Lord God is demonstrating that the gods of the Egyptians are nothing and have no real power. The Pharaoh (who was considered a god) also had no real power. Pharaoh’s job was to bless the Nile so that it would give life-giving water to the land. A large part of Egypt’s well ordered society was dependent upon the Nile.

**Question:** How long do you think the Nile was polluted?

**Challenge:** Have you seen the power of God expressed?

**Scripture:** Revelation 15:7-16:9

## Day 4: Exodus 10:21-22

**Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand towards heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt.’ So Moses stretched out his hand towards heaven, and there was dense darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.**

The next wonder that undid their world view was to plunge them into darkness. All of these plagues were judgments upon the so called gods. The consequences of the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh was not between two powerful people but between spiritual forces.

**Question:** What is the significance of three days? Is there another reference to three days in the Bible?

**Challenge:** What natural event could have caused darkness for three days?

**Scripture:** Ephesians 6:10-17

## Day 5: Exodus 10:24-26

**Then Pharaoh summoned Moses, and said, ‘Go, and worship the Lord. Only your flocks and your herds shall remain behind. Even your children may go with you.’ But Moses said, ‘You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt-offerings to sacrifice to the Lord our God. Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must choose some of them for the worship of the Lord our God, and we will not know what to use to worship the Lord until we arrive there.**

Pharaoh seems to be getting the message that he is not the one in charge but he holds back from being submissive to the God of the Hebrews. When the Hebrews eventually leave they are not just taking their own things with them but much of Egypt’s treasure also, as reparations for the years of forced servitude.

**Question:** Why do you think Pharaoh remained stubborn?

**Challenge:** Have you ever made a promise to God and then the crisis passed and you let go of the promise?

**Scripture:** Exodus 23:20-33

## Day 6: Exodus 10:27-29

**But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.’ Moses said, ‘Just as you say! I will never see your face again.’**

When the heart is hardened we can observe things and events but we are unable to use the data in the exercise of good judgment. We use filters to understand what we perceive. These filters can hinder us from making good decisions. Pharaoh believed he was equal with the gods. He could not admit that the God of the Hebrews was more powerful than himself. To let them go and worship was to admit he was less than the Lord God. We look at Pharaoh and wonder how he could be so stubborn but we today do the same thing. Our prejudices get in the way of using our heart (mind) to make decisions that honor our acknowledgement of Christ as Lord. Paul said, “I do not want to know anything else but Christ crucified.” With his eyes on the cross he was able to overcome his Jewish biases and accept Gentiles into the church without them first becoming Jews.

**Question:** Why did the Lord harden Pharaoh’s heart?

**Challenge:** Are there times when you are stubborn and your mind is hardened? Admit that you are stubborn, believe that God can help open your mind, and then let God do it.

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:12-13:2

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sources ■ Spiritual Friendships ■  
Service In & Beyond the Church

July 28, 2019

## Day 1: Luke 10:27-28

**He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself. "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."**

Over the years one thing that has become clear to me is that our relationship to God is what is most important in life. God created us and we are created in the image of God. I think that much of the distress people feel in life comes from feeling unconnected with God. God is the ground of our being and that which makes life meaningful. Family, friends, success, and work in life give us happiness and joy. However it is our connectedness to God that gives us what we need to enjoy these other things.

**Question:** What do you think is the difference between the heart and the mind?

**Challenge:** How would you explain to someone that loving the Lord will bring about long life?

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:1-9

## Day 2: Luke 10:29

**But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"**

When this question was asked in Jesus' time the formal answer would be very narrow. There was discussion among philosophers as to how far the concept of neighbor should go but in the main most believed it extended to family and those to whom you had a relationship of mutual help.

**Question:** Can you name the individuals that live to the left and right of you?

**Challenge:** Come up with a good definition of neighbor.

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:42-44, Mark 12:32-34

## Day 3: Luke 10:30

**In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead."**

The trip from Jerusalem to Jericho is a downhill trip of about 15 miles through rough and desolate terrain. It has a number of turns in the road because it is downhill. Jericho was a town in the wilderness that was well watered and one where Herod the Great had built a palace. It was a place to go to get out of the heat of summer. This would have been a well traveled road. The taking of his clothes was not just out of being cruel but the clothes of a person were many times worth more what they had in their money belt.

**Question:** Have you ever been robbed? How did you feel?

**Challenge:** How can society prevent robberies?

**Scripture:** Luke 19:1-9

## Day 4: Luke 10:31

**A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.**

There has been endless speculation as to why the two passed by on the other side of the road and did not help the man who was robbed. It is part of the story that Jesus wants to tell and so it belongs to the whole. If one wanted to draw some meaning out of just this verse then we would have to ask ourselves the question, under what circumstances would we not help someone that seems to be in need?

**Question:** Look up Priest and Levite. What is the difference between the two?

**Challenge:** Assume the two are not evil. Why did they pass by on the other side and not help the man that was hurt?

**Scripture:** Hebrews 5:1-10

## Day 5: Luke 10:33-35

**But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'**

Jesus often answers questions with parables. The Samaritan can be anybody that those who are hearing the story would assume would not help another person. The story is very insulting to the Jewish lawyer who asked Jesus to define neighbor. The person who provided help was not known to the injured man. The Samaritan gave without thinking about a "thank you" in return. Each time we give our offering on Sunday morning we act like the Samaritan. We give to people who will never know it is our money that helped them.

**Question:** Look up the word Samaritan. What does it refer to?

**Challenge:** Do you have a test that tells you if someone is in real need or just trying to use you?

**Scripture:** John 4:1-42

## Day 6: Luke 10:36

**Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."**

Mercy is a divine quality. Justice is a human quality. Human beings can dispense justice but to be merciful requires us to ask God to help us in performing a merciful act. Jesus' parable reminds us that the laws of God are good but not more important than people. God did not demand justice for us but forgave us our sins. We can extend mercy to others as we have accepted God's gift of forgiveness and love and share that love with all we meet.

**Question:** Do you think the lawyer took Jesus' advice?

**Challenge:** Think over the last month. Have you had mercy on anybody?

**Scripture:** I Timothy 1:15-17