

# Marks of Discipleship

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

July 5, 2020

## 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.***

Timothy was a great teacher and preacher because his speech is free from manipulation. It was the way Timothy went about his daily activities that made his words powerful. Timothy both told and demonstrated his relationship to God in Christ with love and humility. Paul asks Timothy 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 asks Timothy to continue to lead the congregation until he arrives. Early worship might have been scripture, exhorting & teaching. The scripture that was most often read was the Psalms and Prophets. The early church saw in them predictions of the coming of Jesus. Exhortation was encouraging the congregation to live according to the teaching of Christ. Teaching was explaining 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 and in the First century was "speaking the Word of God." The Word of God in the first century 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). Do you think all ministers should be married?

**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 asked to practice all the things Paul talks about in verses 11-14. Timothy is gifted but if he does not use his gifts, it is like a muscle that is not used - it will lose its strength.

**Question:** Do you believe if you do not use it you will lose it, or do you think some things one never loses 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.***

Until the student must use what is taught, can the teaching be said to have had effect? Teaching is a spiritual gift that usually does not bear fruit right now. The Christian teachings of life, death, and the meaning of life are not appreciated until someone has to use them 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 12, 2020

## Day 1: Genesis 21:1

***The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised.***

The primary reason the people of Israel had hope was that God always kept His promises. If God promised something then God was faithful to deliver on that promise. We would like God to work faster, but then that is our nature to want things now. God is always moving us forward, not back. The Kingdom of God is ahead of us and the Garden of Eden is behind us. We cannot go back to the Garden but we can go forward to the Kingdom.

**Question:** Has it been your experience that God has kept his promises?

**Challenge:** Construct a prayer of request. Ask God for something that is very important to your life.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:1-12:3

## Day 2: Genesis 21:2

***Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.***

In the time of Abraham, the Hebrew people believed that if one had a son their inheritance and memory would be secure for the future (see Ruth 4:10). Sarah was past the age when she could have a child. It was a miracle that both Abraham and Sarah were well past the age of conceiving a child. This was an example of God's promise being fulfilled. Moses had to wait a long time before he went to free the people. Jacob was old when he finally saw the light and stopped running and went back to face his problems. These proved that it may take a while but God fulfills God's promises.

**Question:** From what age to what age can a woman have a baby?

**Challenge:** Do some research to see who is the oldest woman to have a baby in modern times (the last 20 years).

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:1-19

## Day 3: Genesis 21:3-4

***Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.***

This is not the first child Abraham has had. He fathered a son with the slave of his wife Sarah; that child's name was Ishmael. Sarah suggested to Abraham that maybe he should have a child with her slave. Sarah felt that this was the way God had intended to fulfill the promise to Abraham - that he would have offspring that would be like the stars in the sky. Out of her frustration she thought of a way to fulfill God's promise. However it was God's intention that the child of the promise would be from both Abraham and Sarah, not just Abraham.

**Question:** What is circumcision?

**Challenge:** Do some research and see if any other religions or cultures circumcise male children for religious or cultural reasons.

**Scripture:** Genesis 17:1-27

## Day 4: Genesis 21:5

***Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.***

There is a hymn in our hymnal (the Hymn of Promise) whose words describe well how hope is seen even in events that do not at first look to be hopeful. "In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see. In the end is our beginning; in our time, infinity; in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity. In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory." With God all things are possible and God is faithful and will fulfill His promises.

**Question:** Is it important to you to be remembered 100 years from now? Why or why not?

**Challenge:** Think about what you might be involved with or begin something that might be effective 100 years from now.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:1-12:3. Read this again with an eye to noticing how they did not see the end of their efforts.

## Day 5: Genesis 21:6

***Now Sarah said, 'God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.'***

In Hebrew Isaac means "he who laughs." The Hebrew is actually unclear as to if it means he who laughs at or with. The NRSV translates it as laughs with. Sarah's laughter comes from the joy Isaac brought to his mother. She invites the whole world too join her in giving thanks for God's gift of hope. In the same way the Jewish people were to bring joy to the world. Jesus said that he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

**Question:** Can the church bring joy to the world?

**Challenge:** Write down the difference between joy and happiness.

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:1-15

## Day 6: Genesis 21:7

***And she said, 'Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age'.***

Sarah and Abraham, at a advanced age had long ago given up hope for a child. God told them to give themselves to each other in an intimate manner in the hope of conceiving a child. They were to make love to bring about new life. The miracle was not so much the baby but the faith of Sarah and Abraham to risk their hopes and dreams for something that seemed impossible.

**Question:** Why do you think we are supposed to have children when we are young?

**Challenge:** Think of something that is impossible for you to do, however you need to do it.

**Scripture:** Romans 8:28-39

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July 19, 2020

## Day 1: Mark 8:1-3

***During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."***

This is not the same account of the feeding of the 5,000. The number here is 4,000. This miracle comes at the end of a journey that Jesus took from Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, northwest to Tyre, then east over to the Decapolis. The Decapolis was a region east of the Sea of Galilee. It stood for ten cities and was Gentile territory. Jesus stops on the northeastern shore to spend time with folks who have come to hear him preach and teach.

**Question:** What is the longest time you have gone without eating? Why?

**Challenge:** Try the discipline of fasting. Go without food for a portion of the day, say from morning until evening on a day of the week. Eat just enough in the morning to give you some energy.

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:1-9

## Day 2: Mark 8:4

***His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"***

The crowd had come with baskets of food but in the three days it was all eaten. Jesus is amazed at how the Gentiles stayed with him during the three days. These non-Jews were eager to hear about the God's goodness and offer of salvation. In early Christian times there were a number of Christian communities on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The fact that it was a remote place meant that people traveled a distance to hear Jesus. It reminds me of many older homebound folks that long to be able to go to church. These homebound individuals know the power and strength that comes from worshiping and listening to the Gospel. Many who are able to get around take coming to church for granted.

**Question:** Can you think of another time when God asked the Disciples to do something not possible?

**Challenge:** Keep a journal this week of the meals you eat. Indicate if the meal was satisfying and why it was.

## Day 3: Mark 8:5

***"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied.***

The number seven stood for the seven heathen peoples that once inhabited the land (Deuteronomy 7:1). As the seven tribes talked about in Deuteronomy have disappeared, Jesus is saying that the gates of heaven are open to all peoples. The coming of Jesus will not eliminate tribes but integrate them into one family. The church is that integration. We are one in Christ.

**Question:** Who do you think had the loaves of bread?

**Challenge:** Think over your diet and see what you eat the most of.

**Scripture:** Micah 6:3-13

## Day 4: Mark 8:6

***He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so.***

To give honest thanks for something you did not make is an exercise in humility. The bread was made by someone who knew how to put together different elements into something that gives nourishment. Each time I eat I am reminded that the food which allows me to live is made by someone else. Even if I am the one to put together various ingredients to make something nourishing, still I eat in humility because life is given to me. The custom of shoving something in our mouths without pausing to give thanks is regrettable.

**Question:** Why did Jesus wait three days to offer food for the crowd?

**Challenge:** What do you have to offer Jesus that He can multiply?

**Scripture:** Mark 14:20-30

## Day 5: Mark 8:7

***They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.***

The fish reminds us that much of our food comes from God. No matter how talented someone may be, they cannot make a fish. It is God who made the fish and provided it for us. Much of our food comes from some other living thing giving up its life so we can live. God set us in the midst of creation and allows us to use it to live. Even though we were forced out of the garden we have responsibility to be stewards of creation.

**Question:** How much fish would it take to feed 4,000 people, giving everybody 6 oz of fish?

**Challenge:** Look up the types of fish that are found in the Sea of Galilee.

**Scripture:** I Kings 17:1-16

## Day 6: Mark 8:8-9

***The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present.***

The word used for basket here is different than the one used in the feeding of the 5,000. This word refers to a small basket with two handles that a person could carry. In the feeding of the 5,000 the term for basket refers to a very large basket. As I said earlier, the seven refers to the Gentile nations that inhabited the area at one time. With this feeding it showed that the Messiah had come because the Gentiles were preached to and they are now welcome into the kingdom of God.

**Question:** What is the best meal you have ever had?

**Challenge:** Look over your journal and see what makes a meal satisfying.

**Scripture:** II Kings 4:1-7

July 26, 2020

## Day 1: Luke 15:1-2

**Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'**

The Pharisees and scribes have been frustrated by Jesus' refusal to conform to their norms of social interaction. What marked someone as a member of the "real" people of God (in their opinion) was the keeping of the Law (as they articulated it), especially the purity laws. John the Baptist (Luke 3:12-14) and Jesus (Luke 15:1-2) are challenging the Pharisaic view of who is part of the family by saying membership is based on repentance, not being born Jewish and keeping the Law. If God did not welcome sinners nobody would be in the family of God for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

**Question:** Why are tax-collectors mentioned with the sinners?

**Challenge:** Are there some groups you would not want to eat with? Why?

**Scripture:** Luke 3:7-18

## Day 2: Luke 15:3-4

**So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?'**

An average family may have between 5 and 15 sheep, which makes the owner of these 100 sheep wealthy. Even though the owner would have hired help to tend this many sheep, it is not the shepherds who go looking for the sheep but the owner. God is the owner and the fact that the owner goes to get the sheep is an indictment against the other shepherds. They are supposed to care for the sheep but do not go looking for the lost one. God does not think it is acceptable that any are lost. God does not see us as if we are one of many, we are each important and equally valued by God.

**Question:** A one in a hundred loss ratio does not seem bad. Why risk losing more to look for the one?

**Challenge:** How did God find you?

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:30-20:16

## Day 3: Luke 15:5-6

**When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'**

Sheep can become quickly agitated and disoriented if separated by any distance from the flock, so much so that they would have to be carried back. The image of the owner carrying the sheep is an indictment against the legal experts in verse 1 who are grumbling about Jesus' practice of table fellowship. It is in fact Jesus who acts consistent with God's command to care for the sheep. The prophet says, "God will seek out the sheep, rescue them and care for them" - feed them (Ezekiel 34:11-15). In Jesus' ministry (especially table fellowship) the words of the prophet came to life

**Question:** How would you respond to an invitation to come and celebrate the finding of something lost?

**Challenge:** When have you felt "carried back" from some trauma?

**Scripture:** Luke 10:29-37

## Day 4: Luke 15:7

**Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.**

Jesus now connects the meaning of the parable for those He has invited to the table and eat with Him. They are the sinners who have repented. It is their repentance that has made them welcome at the table, not their observance of purity laws. They have cleaned up on the inside even if the outside might still be a bit dirty. Jesus also connects the celebration on earth for the lost that are found with joy in heaven. There is no hint that God loves the "righteous" less, but that celebration is the only correct response to one who has repented.

**Question:** What do you think the term "righteous" means? It does not mean good.

**Challenge:** What would be a good type of celebration for someone who has just professed the Christian faith?

**Scripture:** Luke 16:19-31

## Day 5: Luke 15:8

**'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?'**

The scene shifts from a relatively wealthy shepherd to an improvised woman. Both are images of God and are used to underscore how important each individual is to God. The woman's loss may be more critical to her well being than the loss of 1 in a hundred sheep, however God is just as concerned about 1

in a hundred as 1 in ten. God does not operate on good enough but on all being part of the family of God.

**Question:** How long does she search for the lost coin?

**Challenge:** How long did God search for you?

**Scripture:** Luke 12:16-21

## Day 6: Luke 15:9-10

**When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'**

The theme of joy is continued by the example of the woman looking for a lost coin. Both parables move toward the celebration after the lost are found. Though the parables do not explicitly mention a meal in the gathering of the neighbors to celebrate, it would involve eating of some sort. Jesus is saying that there is joy in heaven when sinners come together to celebrate their new found faith. If heaven is happy why aren't we here on earth eating with those who have found faith? In fact, we do celebrate our faith and belief in Christ as Lord - it is called communion. Sinners especially are welcome to the table.

**Question:** Why do you think we have an open communion?

**Challenge:** After reading these parables think about when you have been in the position of the "found" and in the position of the scribes that are grumbling about too many sinners at the table.

**Scripture:** Luke 18:9-14