

JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

Week 8 – Jesus Followers; Discipleship in Jesus' Day

Have you ever wondered why the men that Jesus called to follow Him dropped everything and ran after Him? These weren't young boys at play. These were men who had occupations. Yet they ran when Jesus called.

DISCIPLESHIP IN JESUS' DAY:

Jewish boys began learning God's Word at 6 years of age. While some have suggested an earlier age, the Talmud states, "Before the age of six do not accept pupils; from that age you can accept them. and stuff them with Torah like an ox." – Talmud, Tractate Baba Bathra.

Beit Sefer

A child usually attended Beit Sefer from age 6 to age 10. Beit Sefer – house of the book. A local synagogue Torah teacher began teaching the children the Torah. The Torah was the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. On the first day of class the rabbi would instruct the children to pour honey over their tablets/slates – and cover their slates. Honey was a sign of God's favor – of His delight. The Torah teacher would then say, "Now class, lick the honey off the slate and off your fingers." And as they did so, the rabbi would say, "May the words of God be sweet to your taste, sweeter than honey to your mouth" (Psalm 119:103). "May the words of God be the most pleasurable, the most enjoyable thing you could even comprehend." Do we feel this way about the Scriptures?

The children were introduced to the Scriptures. They were taught that there was nothing more enjoyable in the entire universe than God's word. From ages 6-10 they would memorize Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. By age 10 they had memorized the entire Torah and completed Beit Sefer.

Beit Talmud

Following Beit Sefer, only the best of the best students would continue on at Beit Talmud – the house of learning. Students who attended Beit Talmud began at age 10. They would memorize the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures through to Malachi. By 13/14 years of age, a young Jewish boy had memorized the entire Hebrew text.

At Beit Talmud, students would begin to learn the Jewish art of questions and answers. In Jesus' day the rabbis taught the young boys to answer with a question. So the rabbi might ask, "What is 2 plus 2?" A student could then answer with, "What is 8 minus 4?" Or they could ask, "What is 16 divided by four?"

When Jesus' parents could not find Him on the return trip from Jerusalem, they traveled back to Jerusalem and found Him in the Temple. Luke 2:46 tells us that "they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."

At Beit Talmud, they learned "remez" which means "hint" in Hebrew. The Rabbis would call out a passage of Scripture and the student would have to give the Scripture before and after that passage. They lived in the text!

Beit Midrash

At the end of study at Beit Talmud, when a Jewish boy was 13-14 years old, if a Jewish boy was the best of the best, then he would present himself to a well-known respected, powerful rabbi. He would say, “Rabbi, I want to become your disciple, your talmudim, your student. Please let me in your Beit Midrash, your house of study.” And so the rabbi examined and asked lots of questions, to find out if indeed this child was the best of the best. Because each rabbi wanted to teach his thinking, his philosophy, his interpretation of Scripture. Do you know what a rabbi’s teaching/philosophy was called? It was called his yoke. This rabbi wanted to know when he questioned this potential disciple, “Is this boy able to become a rabbi himself and to teach and spread my yoke?” And if the rabbi believed that a young boy was indeed the best of the best, that they were able to become a rabbi, He would say, “Lech Acharai – Come, follow me.” The young boy would then his family. He would leave his village. He would leave the local synagogue where he had been studying. He would leave everything and follow that rabbi. The young boy would become a talmudim, a disciple, a student. He would give his life to being exactly like that rabbi and he would follow the rabbi everywhere. Disciples, through the teaching of their rabbi, were to become reproductions of their master!

It was said of these talmudim/disciples/students - “May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.” A rabbi would walk into a village and behind him would be his talmudim following right behind him. The roads were dusty. Therefore, the rabbi’s disciples, who so closely followed their rabbi, would get covered with the dust of their rabbi. “May you follow him so closely that the dust of his sandals covers you.” Talmud.

Are we walking so closely behind Jesus? With Jesus? – that we’re covered in His dust?

But for some Jewish boys when the rabbis quizzed them they did NOT say, “Lech Acharai – Come, follow me.” But instead they said “Ah, my son, you do know Torah. And you know Torah well. But you are not able to be my talmudim, my disciple, my student.” So the rabbi would say, “Go, home to your village. Make babies. Pray that they become rabbis. Go home and learn the family business - fishing, farming, carpentry. Because you won’t be studying to be a rabbi.”

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, “Come unto Me all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

The rabbis in Jesus’ day would quiz the students and would choose the ones who were the best of the best of the best. Jesus called disciples who had already failed the rabbi test! Jesus told these grown men, “Lech Acharai – Come, follow Me ... Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.” Why did Jesus choose Peter, James, John and the rest of the disciples? Because He believed they could become, aside from Judas, like Him. They could become like Jesus - not based on their own merit. Based on what He would do in their lives! Is this not GOD’S GRACE?

He is calling us today, “Lech Acharai – Come, follow Me.” It’s all about Whom you follow.

What does discipleship look like today?

Oswald Chambers in his 10/21 devotional: Most of us develop our Christianity along the line of our temperament, not along the line of God. Impulse is a trait in natural life. Discipleship is built entirely on the supernatural grace of God. Walking on water is easy to those who are impulsive; however, walking on dry land as a disciple of Jesus is a different thing. It requires the supernatural grace of God to live 24 hours in every day as a saint, to go through drudgery, to live an ordinary, unobserved, ignored existence as a disciple of Jesus. It is inbred in us that we have to do exceptional things for God; but we have not – to do so. We have to be exceptional in the ordinary things, to be holy in mean streets, among mean people. This is not learned in five minutes!

Simplify – reorder our lives. God will not speed up to catch up with us. He expects us to slow our pace in our walk with Him.

Psalm 1 – *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. ⁴ The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”*

Be still – and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10). “Cease” – “be still” – “rapha” in the Hebrew – release, be quiet, abandon, do nothing. Cease means “to let drop,” “to let alone,” “to refrain from” – it’s a deliberate taking hands off. Abandon – give up trying in our own strength. REST in knowing Who God is. In Psalm 46, “selah” is repeated three times. Selah means to pause - to reflect. (See the “I AM” page attached)

Psalm 94:19 – *“In the multitude of my thoughts/anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.”*

Rom. 12:1-2 – *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Surrender

Prov. 3:5-6 – *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct^[a] your paths.”*

How can we be like Jesus – conformed to His image?

Phil. 2:5 – “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*”

He humbled Himself and became obedient – to the point of death – even the death of the cross! Total humility and excruciating pain!

We need to know God more intimately. . .

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!

Psalm 62:5-7 – “*My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.*

⁶ *He only is my rock and my salvation;*

He is my defense; I shall not be moved. ⁷ *In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.”*

How can we be like Jesus? Phil. 2:5-6; Gal. 2:20 – die to self; focus on others. In Acts and in the Gospels – “disciple” is used 265 times. “MY disciple” is used 7 times!

Luke 9:23 – if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. What does dying to self look like? (See attached)

Walking in the dust of the Rabbi - Fix our eyes on Him.

Heb. 12:1-2 – “*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher (the trailblazer, the champion) of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

That joy – bringing many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10).

Race – agony in Greek. Agonize! Do we run in agony? Sometimes!

BUT, we can run from/FROM the position of VICTORY because God has already WON the VICTORY!

The disciples walked so closely – they walked in the dust of the rabbi. He was in full view all the time. Is Jesus in full view to us? ALL the time? A disciple of Jesus – a Jesus’ follower – needs to be fixed on Him! This ALL - HAS to be by God’s grace. . .

When grace changes the heart, submission out of fear changes to submission out of love. When we submit out of fear our view of God is NOT correct! It might be that our view of ourselves is wrong. We might have too high a view of ourselves and too low a view of God! When God’s graces changes our hearts, our submission to God is submission out of LOVE (II Cor. 5:14 – the love of Christ compels us – controls us – pressure that causes ACTION!) – and, in the process, true humility is born. And, when humility is exhibited in our lives – we KNOW that this is ALL FROM HIM!

“Consider” Him – “consider” means to weigh something over and against another. We need to “compare” ourselves with what He endured. The next time we’re feeling sorry for ourselves – we need to compare ourselves with Him.

Psalm 139:23-24 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

How do we surrender?

Possessions – put them in the proper perspective and release them one by one.

AW Tozier – “The blessedness of possessing nothing! I come trembling, but I do come. Please root from my heart all those things that I have cherished so long so that You may enter in without a rival.”

Position – let it go! Release your place in life. A position can become like a god!

Plans – release them!

People in your life – children, parents, spouse, friends – hold them loosely.

WHEN WE SPEND TIME WITH JESUS, HE OPENS OUR EYES AND CHANGES OUR PERSPECTIVE

Questions:

- What kind of disciple are you? What kind of disciple do you wish to become?
- In what way do you desire to be more like Jesus?
- What is the next step for you in the process of sanctification – of maturing – of becoming more like Him?

Suggested Homework:

- “Consider” Jesus. Begin to compare yourself to Jesus; don’t compare yourself to others. How has this changed your perspective? What have you learned?
- Add to the verses already noted in the handout re: simplifying, being still, surrendering.

The I AM For Our Every Need

Sooner or later, everyone will be beat up, battered, bruised, and burned out by the dailies of life. List every need and emotion that you are feeling, no matter how small they seem. After you have acknowledged all your emotions and needs, go through the names of God until you find the expression of His character that meets each need. For every need, there is a corresponding attribute of God. Affirm that God is still God, no matter how you feel. Have a praise party! God is able to do much more than you need or can think or ask.

He is the I AM for our needs

He is Abba Father when we need fathering.
He is acceptance when we feel unwanted.
He is adequacy for our inadequacy.
He is all-sufficient in our hardest situations.
He is the Amen, the true witness when we are tempted to lie.
He is the Answer for our uncertainty and questions.
He is the Author of faith for our unbelief or doubt.

He is the Bread of life for our spiritual hunger.
He is the Bright Morning Star for the darkness in the valley of the shadow.
He is broken and spilled out for us when we've been used.
He is the Burden-bearer when we are heavy laden.
He is before all things when we're surprised.

He is cleansing for our defilement and shame.
He is closer than a brother when we are lonely.
He is our Comforter who wipes away tears in our griefs and sorrows.

He is our Defender when we are under attack.
He is our Deliverer from our bondage or captivity.
He is our Door-opener when it looks like there's no way out.

He is our sure Foundation, our solid rock when we're shaking and insecure.
He is our Faithful Friend when friends fail us.
He is Fullness when we're empty.

He is God of details when we're frustrated.
He is God of love when we feel unloved and need a hug.
He is God who is there when we feel alone or abandoned.
He is our Guide and the Way when we're confused and need direction.
He is grace when we're too hard on ourselves or others.

He is our Healer for woundedness, rejection, and sickness.
He is Hope when we despair, are discouraged, and want to quit.
He is Humility for our pride.

He is Joy when we are depressed.
He is our Keeper and Protector when we are vulnerable.
He is the Lifter of our heads when we feel oppressed and weighed down.

He is long-suffering, slow to anger when we have blown it again.

He is Mercy for criticism and unkindness.

He is Mighty God, our strength for our weakness or temptation.

He is Never-failing, always the same when we are fickle and faithless.

He is Overcoming victory for defeat and depression.

He is the Plumb Line to stand against the world's situational ethics.

He is the Prince of peace when we are stressed, worried, and confused.

He is the Provider for every financial need.

He is the Quieter of the storm for afflictions without and struggles within.

He is Reconciliation for breaches in relationships.

He is Rest when we're tired and can't go on.

He is the Restorer of our souls when we're bruised and beaten down.

He is the Reviver, living water when we are depleted, barren, thirsty.

He is Satisfaction when we've tried everything and come up empty.

He is the Song, our praise when we're joyless and heavy of heart.

He is the Spirit of the Lord when we need to be set free.

He is our Strength when we're weak.

He is Trinity unity for mending separation.

He is Truth for the world's warped opinions.

He is True Riches when we're tempted to covet the world's wealth.

He is Vengeance when we are angry and wronged.

He is Wisdom for our hard choices.

This is merely a beginning. Make your own list as a personal affirmation that God is your Need-meeter. He is the Most High God who reigns over all. To whom else would we go? He alone is the Word of eternal life.

Dying to Self

Luke 9:23-24 – “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”

In our daily lives, what does dying to self look like?

When you are forgotten or neglected or purposely set at naught, and you sting and hurt with the insult of the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ – that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient, loving silence – that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, or any annoyance, when you can stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility, and endure it as Jesus endured it – that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any attitude, any interruption by the will of God – that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown – that is dying to self.

When you see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question God while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances – that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart – that is dying to self!