

Jesus and **His** **Disciples**



“ ‘So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows’ ” (Matt. 10:31, NIV).

Not Alone

INTRODUCTION

Ps. 145:18

In December 1999, a team of Seventh-day Adventist evangelists embarked on a crusade to a town of idol worshippers. This town had been noted for murdering people who tried to bring in any new forms of worship.

When these men prayed to the Lord and requested whether they should go to this town, God's answer was, "The Adventist message to all the world in this generation." They were encouraged by these words and set off on their journey.

As soon as the evangelists began preaching the Word of God in this town, the people began persecuting them. The town's people beat the evangelists and destroyed their possessions. But none of these attacks stopped the evangelists. The wonder of it all was that whenever the people tried to kill any of the servants of the Lord, a mighty hand would save them. And after two weeks of the crusade, many people accepted the faith.

The Lord, who has commissioned us to spread the gospel, assures us that He is with us always (Matt. 28:20). The "Lord's faithful servants will receive the bitter-est persecution from false teachers, who will not hear the word of God, and who prepare stumbling blocks to put in the way of those who would hear. But God's people are not to fear. Satan cannot go beyond his limit. The Lord will be the defense of His people. He regards the injury done to His servants for the truth's sake as done to Himself."^{*}

**But none of these attacks
stopped the evangelists.**

The Lord, who sent the disciples to all the world and through all types of hardship, was with them and helped them to triumph. The Lord was with the Reformers in the Dark Ages and helped them to stand victorious. This is the same Lord who will be with us and make us champions of His course. He will carry us on His shoulders when the road is rough.

Let us then stand up for Jesus as faithful disciples of the Cross. Let us lift high His banner, from victory to victory. And let us always remember that He will never leave us lonely, until every enemy of His Word is forever vanquished.

This week, we will study Jesus and His disciples, and what it means to witness for Him.

^{*}Maranatha, *The Lord Is Coming*, p. 191.

Sunday
July 27

Living Witnesses of the Kingdom

LOGOS

Matt. 10:16–23, 27; Acts 17:30; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15

Generation after generation, the gospel has been carried forth by many agencies. John 3:16 states that Christ came to offer salvation to all who believe in Him. Thus the spread of this good news is timeless and unlimited by boundaries. It was for this purpose that many patriarchs and prophets, apostles and disciples, lived a selfless life.

Among the numerous agents of hope enumerated in the Bible, the disciples of Christ were the group that received guidance concerning the spread of the gospel by the Savior Himself. It is necessary to study the instructions Christ gave them if we want to be living witnesses of the gospel. Today, let's look at a few of the instructions and principles of witnessing that Christ dealt with.

It Takes a Daily Walk (Matt. 10:27; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15)

The disciples of Jesus learned the art of witnessing at the feet of the Master. They heard the Savior preach the message of hope to the hopeless. They saw Him give sight to the blind. And they heard Him expound sound biblical truths to the undiscerning. They stayed with Him throughout all of His toils on the Judean plain. As a result, they gained some level of confidence that freed them from fearing

There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good.

the great Jewish scholars of their day.

The life of Christ spoke irrevocably to them about His message. His life was the pattern they were to follow. Thus "they taught what they had learned of Jesus."¹ It was as Christ instructed them, " 'What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs' " (Matt. 10:27, NIV).

No one can be a messenger of God without knowing the message. We can become living witnesses of the gospel only by staying close to Jesus each moment of our lives. "A daily, earnest striving to know God, and Jesus whom He has sent, would bring power and efficiency to the soul. The knowledge obtained by diligent searching of the Scriptures would be flashed into memory at the right time."²

Your Weakness Counts Not (Acts 17:30)

Once the disciples accepted Jesus' invitation to be channels of the gospel, their

weaknesses were strengthened by Him who called and sent them. John and his brother James were known to be quick tempered (Mark 3:17) and Peter was tribulistic (Acts 10:1–33); however, all the men became great tools in the hands of the Creator.

Christ came not for the righteous but to save sinners (Matt. 9:13). Once we are saved, we desire to tell others that they too can find pardon and joy in Christ. With our weaknesses in the hands of Jesus, we are best suited to proclaim the hope the world yearns for. There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good. If we realize our hopelessness and need of divine power, we shall not trust ourselves. The angels of God are appointed to watch over us if we put ourselves under their guardianship.

Sheep in the Midst of Wolves (Matt. 10:16–23)

Another instruction that Christ gave His disciples was that they should exercise the greatest tact and thoughtfulness as they attempt to share the gospel with all types of people.

They were not to engage in foolish arguments with unbelievers (1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:23). Witnessing is not persuasion that may end up in arguments. Rather, it is telling others what God has done for you. It is the Spirit of God alone that convinces hearts to follow Christ. Therefore, Christ taught the disciples to exhibit the highest level of wisdom in carrying out their duties as agents of hope. Be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

There was no doubt that the disciples had the everlasting gospel that quenches the thirst of a parched soul. They sat at the feet of the Savior Himself, but none of their words or work could have effected a great deal of change in the lives of fallen humanity if they would not have employed tact and speech in good season (Prov. 15:23).

Again Christ instructed His disciples not to endure unnecessary persecutions but to escape. “‘When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another’” (Matt. 10:23, NIV). He Himself exemplified this principle in Luke 4:28–32 when He left Nazareth for Capernaum after the people in Nazareth forbade Him to teach there.

REACT

1. Which of the instructions and principles mentioned in today’s lesson have you found to be most helpful, and why?
2. How can you then use the instructions and principles in your life?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 349.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

Monday
July 28

Faithful Witnesses for Christ

TESTIMONY

Matt. 10:32, 33

As Jesus taught the people about salvation, they “listened to the words of mercy flowing so freely from the lips of the Son of God. They heard the gracious words, so simple and so plain that they were as the balm of Gilead to their souls.”¹ Later, Jesus would entrust the disciples with these words. Today, we are Jesus’ disciples, and the call to confess Him before others is also our call.

But we must remember that he “who would confess Christ must have Christ abiding in him. He cannot communicate that which he has not received. The disciples might speak fluently on doctrines, they might repeat the words of Christ Himself; but unless they possessed Christlike meekness and love, they were not confessing Him. A spirit contrary to the spirit of Christ would deny Him, whatever the profession. Men may deny Christ by evilspeaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind. They may deny Him by shunning life’s burdens, by the pursuit of sinful pleasure. They may deny Him by conforming to the world, by uncourteous behavior, by the love of their own opinions, by justifying self, by cherishing doubt, borrowing trouble, and dwelling in darkness. In all these ways they declare that Christ is not in them.”²

**“A spirit contrary to the
spirit of Christ would deny
Him”**

“In order to confess Christ, we must have Him to confess. No one can truly confess Christ unless the mind and spirit of Christ are in him. If a form of godliness, or an acknowledgment of the truth, were always a confession of Christ, we might say: Broad is the way that leadeth unto life, and many there be that find it. We must understand what it is to confess Christ and wherein we deny Him. It is possible with our lips to confess Christ yet in our works deny Him. The fruits of the Spirit [Gal. 5:22, 23] manifested in the life are a confession of Him. If we have forsaken all for Christ, our lives will be humble, our conversation heavenly, our conduct blameless. The powerful, purifying influence of truth in the soul, and the character of Christ exemplified in the life, are a confession of Him.”³

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 365.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 303, 304.

The Task of All

EVIDENCE

Matt. 10:8–10

All through Scripture, the most important task ever assigned to woman or man is the work of spreading the gospel. But in today's world, many evangelists, especially many television evangelists, have profited greatly through their ministry, so that their greatest interest appears to be the mansions they live in instead of the souls they are to win.

In developing countries, it's rather common to see a man or woman preaching the word of God on buses. Even some who have no jobs have chosen to do this in order to take money from people's pockets. But Christ instructed His disciples not to ask for collections—money, food, or clothing—in return for the gospel they preached. Because they had freely received, they were to freely give (Matt. 10:8–10).

Peter, James, John, and Andrew had their own jobs before they met Jesus. And the Bible makes it clear that Peter was a married man, because he had a mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14). Nonetheless, when Jesus called them, they did not hesitate. They left their assets and followed Him. Furthermore, Jesus desired to help people from all levels of society—the poor and the sick as well as the rich and the degreed. And His call to follow Him also goes to every type of person. Remember, He said, “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matt. 10:32, NRSV).

Jesus desired to help people from all levels of society. . . .

REACT

1. If you are not a pastor, think of specific ways you can spread the gospel as you go about the activities of your daily life.
2. What is your most valuable possession? Are you willing to give it up in order to follow your Savior and Lord?
3. Jesus did not consider one person, or one group of people, “better” or more “valuable” than another. With that in mind, is there someone, or a group of people, you are not fond of? Ask God to help you with this feeling and to show you how you can better show them His love.

Disciples for Christ

HOW-TO

Matt. 10:32, 33

As a teacher, I understand what it means to be trained in order to share the gospel. I also understand the importance of keeping myself up-to-date with the subject I teach. The disciples were taught by the greatest Teacher of all time, and their subject was salvation. He commissioned them to go into all the world, preaching and teaching the gospel and baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Christ extends this same commission to us. He says through His words in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit, "I call upon you because you are my modern disciple." But in order to fulfill this commission faithfully, we must have a strong relationship with Him. "A daily, earnest striving to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, would bring power and efficiency to the soul. The knowledge obtained by diligent searching of the Scriptures would be flashed into the memory at the right time. But if any had neglected to acquaint themselves with the words of

Live as Christ lived . . .

Christ, if they had never tested the power of His grace in trial, they could not expect that the Holy Spirit would bring His words to their

remembrance. They were to serve God daily with undivided affection, and then trust Him."¹

So in order to be disciples of Christ we should do these *daily*:

1. *Seek* the Lord through prayer, Bible study, and meditation on God's Word.
2. *Accept* the great commission to share the gospel with all whom we come in contact.
3. *Trust* the Lord to help us do and say the right thing at the right time.
4. *Live* as Christ lived, blessing others through kind words and deed so they will see Him in us.

As we daily strive to be disciples, let us bear in mind that the Lord said, "As you confess Me before men, so I will confess you before God and the holy angels. You are to be My witnesses upon earth, channels through which My grace can flow for the healing of the world. So I will be your representative in heaven."²

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 355.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

First Love; True Love

OPINION

Rev. 2:2–5

As one of the first disciples to be addressed by Christ with the command to follow Him, Philip did not readily believe (John 1:43). His introduction of Jesus to Nathanael as Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, depicts that Philip was not yet convinced of Jesus' divinity (John 1:45).¹ Why was this so? Why are many church members today living as though they are not convinced of Jesus' divinity?

Is it because they have left their first love? While we believe our doctrines are correct, and while we hate false doctrine, Christ says this is not enough. Christ's solemn warning in Revelation 2:2–5 demands that we awaken from our sleep to follow Him. When we forget that He was and is to be our first love, it doesn't really matter what information we harbor in our hearts as truth.²

We have a sacred message to share. The messages of the three angels are not theory. Rather they are the solemn truth of God for these last days (Rev. 14:9–11). We must bring to the attention of the world the commandments of God and the importance of faith in Jesus (Rev. 14:12). We should speak words of kindness and do loving acts of service that reveal Christ's character. We receive God's grace in order to freely give. The new command-

Christ says this is not enough.

ment He gave to us is to love one another as Christ has loved us. Such love will show everyone that He is our first and true love (John 13:34, 35).³

REACT

Recall how you felt when you first accepted Christ. Compare or contrast this first love to how you have felt lately about Him. What can you do to strengthen your relationship with Him?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 292, 293.

2. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 370.

3. *In Heavenly Places*, p. 168.

Friday
August 1

Living in Jesus

EXPLORATION

Matt. 10:32; Mark 5:19

CONCLUDE

When we are living in Jesus, we will be telling others about Him in word and action. Excitement will be seen in our faces. We will witness to others of the great things God is doing for us. Each day we will spend time in prayer, Bible study, and sharing. We will have new and precious experiences to share of how God has worked in our lives.

CONSIDER

- Interviewing an evangelist, missionary, or pastor. Were they persecuted as they witnessed for the Lord? Share one of their experiences with the class.
- Role-playing giving a Bible study on God's love for us. Then find a neighbor that you can share it with. Be sure to include examples of God's love for you.
- Observing three evangelists. Find Bible verses that describe the witnessing methods they use.
- Making and decorating a sign inviting people to church or to Vacation Bible School.
- Meditating on Matthew 10:32, 33. In your prayer journal, plan ways you can confess God before your peers.
- Writing music for 2 Timothy 2:15. Teach it to your class and to a Bible study student.
- Outlining new ways you can witness, and trying one of them.

CONNECT

Luke 22:32; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15.

Messages to Young People, pp. 200–202, 370.

Arthur and Denise Blessitt, "How to Witness at Home and Anywhere!" Retrieved November 13, 2007 from <http://www.blessitt.com/home.html>.