

How to be an Excellent Disciple, Part 2

Luke 6:39-49

So turn back to Luke 6. Religionist, morality preachers, they're blind, number one, they're hypocritical, number two. That's the first couple of illustrations Jesus uses. And then third, verses 43-45, religionists, morality preachers, they produce evil fruit. I mean how could we expect anything else? How can we expect spiritual life from spiritually dead blind hypocrites?

They may call Jesus, "Lord, Lord," but they're never actually able to do what he actually says. How can anything good come out of that kind of a life? Apparent acts of obedience on the outside, they're always going to be superficial, skin deep and short lived. And that's the surest way, number four, verses 47-49, of falling into a swift certain sudden destruction. That's, that's basic, if you're going to live that way and never question yourself, never think about what you need to work on, what you need to grow in.

If, if the word is never going to penetrate your heart, you know what? Living that way, you may as well build your house near the river, like the Poudre or the Big Thompson, and it's prone to swell and flood, right? It's happened every now and again. Torrential rains come, you build right near the river because it's pretty. You like to fish. But no foundation. No foundation.

Man, that foundation's just too much digging. It's hard. The more I dig, there's water coming through. I just want it to be easy. So you build your house. It's looks beautiful on the outside, nice roof, good paint job, porch in front. You can cast your rod from the porch into the river. You're good! Everything's great. Everything's great until the river swells, floods, washes away your house.

It's utterly foolish, isn't it? You'd never do that. Just on a practical human level, you'd never do that. In fact, we have insurances to prevent stupid people from doing stupid stuff just like that, right? You can't do that. It's not allowed for

you to be stupid, right? But this is exactly the way religionists and morality preachers live their lives and teach others to do, as well.

So the blind, the hypocrites, evil doers, those who build without foundations, that describes many people that Jesus is talking to in this sermon. He's concerned about them. It describes many churchgoers today. And yes, many evangelical churchgoers, as well. Friends of yours. Friends of mine. Family members of ours. Maybe even some of you who are here today sitting among us professing a loyalty to Jesus Christ that you do not practice. Professing a relationship with him that you do not truly possess. And you've become hypocritical judges of everybody else around you.

Listen, only Christ can produce within us a distinctively Christian character, that's motivated and governed by the kind of love that he commanded in the main body of this sermon. Only Christ can enable us to obey what he commands us to do. So that the character that he has commanded, a character that is dominated by God-like love, grows within us, becomes manifest externally on the outside for others to see clearly;

distinctively Christian conduct. Only God can produce that, because of Christ, by the Holy Spirit in us. Anything else is a fraud.

So that's the unifying theme of Jesus' conclusion. The importance of obedience to what Jesus has commanded, a distinctively Christian character that's manifested in distinctively Christian conduct. That's what brings everything together. That's Jesus' theme here at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, but let's ask a third question. This one about Jesus' conclusion. What's the main concern in Jesus' conclusion? You say, Well, you just answered that, obedience, right? No, that's the unifying theme. Okay.

The main concern in Jesus' conclusion is a little bit, it's related, it's a little bit different than that. What's the main concern in Jesus' conclusion? As we learn from Luke's hint about the parable, Jesus' main concern in this conclusion of his sermon is to tell these disciples to be very careful who they follow. Jesus is concerned for his disciples to teach them that their obedience is tied to their future discipleship. How you obey is tied directly to who is discipling you.

Here's where we see the unifying theme of the conclusion and the main concern of the conclusion coming together. In fact, if you remember, just look back in Luke 6 to verses 17 and 18. There's this massive crowd of people there from all over Palestine. Jesus had come down off the mountain. He had named his twelve apostles. And in verse 17 it says, "He came down with them, he stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured."

Then we get into it, right? They came to hear him. Jesus was there physically, bodily in the flesh to teach them, to heal their diseases, to cast out their demons. In fact, verse 19 affirms that, "All the crowd sought to touch him, because power came out from him and healed them all." They could only touch him if he were there physically, there bodily and you say, Yeah. That's obvious. What are you getting at?

Here's what we need to understand. We need to kind of get into the mind of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He's thinking as a good shepherd thinks about his sheep. And as a good shepherd who is about to be relieved by another shepherd and is going to go off and do other things, he's concerned. If he loves the sheep, he's concerned about what's going to happen to this flock after I'm leaving. He knew his, this time on the mountain would come to an end. Wouldn't be long before all of these people would be going home.

Multitude from Judea and Jerusalem would go back to Judea and Jerusalem. The multitude from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon would go back to the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. Back to life. Back to routines. Back to the grind. So what then? What is going to equip them when Jesus isn't there to touch, to listen to, to heal infirmities and diseases? What happens when they come down off that mountain top and get back into regular life?

I'll throw this in, as well. Jesus foresaw, even at this early juncture, Jesus knew that he would be crucified, would be raised from the dead, and would ascend into heaven. And so here, even now in our text, he's preparing his disciples for life

without his physical, bodily presence on earth. There'd come a time when they wouldn't hear his audible voice to teach them. They wouldn't be able to grab his physical hand, his steady hand to guide them. They would not be able to watch his perfect life, to disciple them.

So Jesus is preparing his disciples even here at this early point. He's preparing them for the church age. He's preparing them for another Comforter who, whom he will send to teach them. The Comforter would start with these twelve apostles, and we could say minus Judas Iscariot. He's going to be replaced by Matthias, Acts 1:26, because of his apostacy.

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come to remind the apostles of everything that Jesus had taught them. He would guide the apostles into all truth. And through them, Jesus would shepherd all of his future disciples, the members of his church, through the witness of the apostles and through Christians. That's God's plan. That's God's wisdom. To use Christians to disciple other Christians. Okay?

Jesus knew he'd no longer be physically present with these disciples. And the obedience of his disciples, which is so critical, so vital, so crucial, it's the thematic element running through the entire Sermon on the Mount, that would be severely compromised, not possible, if he didn't teach these apostles and his disciples some foundational principles of discipleship.

That is the main concern in this conclusion is that we learn some principles of discipleship. That's what we're seeing here. Jesus is preparing his disciples for discipleship. He's laying down foundational principles of discipleship. Telling them how to be good disciples. Turning them away from false teachers. Pointing them to reliable trustworthy teachers. He's telling his disciples what to look for as the right effect of true, faithful discipleship; bearing fruit, hearing and doing, building on foundations of rock.

So while there's a lot to learn about discipleship in this section, I'm going to cover the ground in the coming weeks, organizing this in four principles, that we can see four principles of discipleship here running from verse 39 to the end



of the chapter. Four principles. Christian discipleship is effective in producing this vital issue of obedience to what Jesus has said when we're mindful of four things.

We must make sure, number one, we're following the right authority, verses 39-40. The right authority. Number two, we must make sure we follow with an attitude of humility, humility. We can maybe even say teachability, but humility, verses 41-42. We must look for, number three, for the principle of life manifest in fecundity. Fecundity is an old word that means fruitfulness that's verses 43-45. Finally, we must pay heed to our fidelity, our fidelity to obedience, verses 46 and 49.

So four principles, authority, humility, fecundity, and fidelity. That's how we're going to organize the content and cover the ground in the weeks to come. As commentator Joel Green said, "The following that Jesus seeks is a full orbed one. His is a message that calls for total transformation with a consistency of goodness between the inside and the outside of a person."

That is very true. It's full orbbed. It's total transformation. Nothing is left untouched. Discipleship is, in other words, about teaching them to observe everything that Jesus has commanded. Heard that before, right? Matthew 28. According to God's eternal purpose and will, based upon Christ's perfect sufficient work, by the Holy Spirit's infinite power, Jesus intends to bring about the steady obedience of his people through the practice and principles of Christian discipleship.

So the unifying theme, as Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount, is that his disciples obey what Jesus has commanded them. And because of his soon departure, discipleship is here become his main concern. Jesus intends to connect the people in the crowd to good, faithful, righteous teachers and leaders, starting with his twelve newly appointed apostles.

Remember, they're going to go back to where they came from. They're going to be hearing all their regular teachers in the synagogue. And Jesus is saying, No, I want you, want you to listen to someone else instead. Don't listen to blind guides. Listen to these guys. But notice that Jesus here, he doesn't, he doesn't just tell the gathered crowds, hey, you see these twelve

guys that are right around me here? I'm going to name them for you. They're my guys. They're my apostles. Follow them; you'll be safe.

Why doesn't he do that? I mean, wouldn't that be pretty easy? It may be easy, but it would not be safe. Because Jesus knew that in a very short time Judas Iscariot would fall away. Putting faith in men for the sake of men is never safe. Not only that, but from the perspective of about 2000 years of church history, we can see that the apostles, the first generation of Christians, they're all in heaven, now, aren't they? They're all gone.

What happens when not only Jesus ascends to heaven, but they leave us, too? So instead of pointing out people, Jesus instead teaches his disciples principles that keep them safe. He gives them discernment so they can judge anyone. By sticking close to these principles: authority, humility, fecundity, and fidelity, it's how we can evaluate all things. It's how we can rightly judge all people. It's how we can determine which authorities are true, reliable guides following Christ's authority and which ones are not.

How do we apply these principles of discipleship? How do we apply them? Give you just two things very quickly. First, by looking forward, and second, by looking backward. Look forward and look backward. We're to look forward, look ahead to the kind of person we're following. Is this person pursuing Christ or not? Is his life bearing fruit that's good or bad? But we're also to be looking backward, behind us, considering those who are following us.

Some people have said, I think rightly, that we need to have in our lives, people who are to us in the role of Paul and in the role of Timothy. In relation to our Paul, we are the Timothy, right? We are following the pattern and direction of a more mature Christian. And in relation to our Timothys, we're like Paul to that person. We're always conscience of those who are watching us, following us, learning from us. I read earlier in the service from 2 Timothy 1:13, where Paul says, "Follow the pattern of sound words you've heard in me, the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

Later, 2 Timothy 3:10, "You have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra—which persecutions I endured." You followed all that, Timothy. The issue of following Paul's example, it wasn't just a relationship of older apostle to younger pastor, this isn't just a ministry issue of professional or, or career ministry.

This is also just a more mature Christian to younger, less mature Christians. Because Paul said the same thing to entire churches. Setting the pattern of discipleship in the principle of imitation. For regular Christians as well. Paul told the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4:16, "I urge you then, be imitators of me." Can you say that to other people? Can you tell them, imitate me and my life, not just what you see here on Sunday mornings? Not what you see in a ministry context, but in my home, in my private space, so to speak.

Can you say what Paul said? Imitate me. Later, later in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ." Look, you want to know how to follow Christ, come on, step right here,

let's go together. You walk with me in life and see how I follow Christ and you follow Christ in the same way. I think there would be a lot more holiness in our churches if we did this. He said the same thing to the Philippian church. Philippians 3:17, "Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes," it's not just about Paul, right. "Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." There's a pattern of living for Christians. It's found in Paul, illustrated by Paul. But it's also in those who follow the same pattern.

So again, in applying these principles of discipleship in the coming weeks, as we walk from, from one illustration to another that Jesus uses, we always want to be looking forward, but also looking backward. First, what do we mean by saying we apply the principle of discipleship by looking forward. The principle of discipleship here has to do with following righteous authority, righteous authority. Turn away and stay away from unrighteous, ungodly leadership. But draw near and pursue those who manifest a trajectory of practicing righteous authority.

Giving us the principles of discipleship, we need to start by applying them to the leaders we follow. Authority, humility, fecundity, fidelity, what are they like? Hebrews 13:17 tells us "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God consider the outcome of their way of life." What's he talking about there? Fruit, which takes time to see the results of, right? "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."

As Jesus' disciples, we're responsible to put ourselves, and our families under the right teachers. Christ holds us responsible for that. For examining the Bible and then looking at our leadership through the lens of Scripture. Notice I didn't say the lens of tradition, the lens of your heritage, religious heritage, the lens of your preference. Not the lens of your hearsay. The lens of Scripture. God's Word is the only safe and infallible guide to judge all things.

We cannot allow ourselves, by God's command, we cannot allow ourselves, to be led around by blind men, spiritually blind, unregenerate men. We can't follow spiritual hypocrites. Those who say one thing and do another. We can't follow those

who produce bad fruit in their lives or those who hear or even teach God's Word, but don't put it into practice in their own life.

Why is that? Because Luke 6:40, the principle of discipleship, you're going to be just like them. "Everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." So all disciples of Jesus Christ need to ask whether or not the leaders that they follow are regenerate, consistent, fruitful, obedient. First as Christians, then as teachers who teach others and leaders who lead others. What's the result? What is the fruit of their leadership? We are responsible to Christ for the leaders we follow.

Secondly, we also need to apply these principles of discipleship by looking backward, by looking behind us. And this is the discipleship principle of righteous influence. Righteous influence. As you learn from the leaders that you follow, as you learn from the voices of authority in your life, of necessity, by God's design, you will exert influence on other people, other Christians, other disciples.



You need to be very conscience of what your life and your example is illustrating for other people. You also need to be conscience that you are leading and then how you're leading. All those disciples of Jesus Christ who are in the role of a teacher, obviously, whether by formal ordination to ecclesiastical office, or by God's design, whether assigned by his good providence to a less formal role in the church, or as a husband, automatically in the role of a leader. As a father, automatically in the role of a leader and a teacher. You need to be wary of the influence of your own authority and your influence on other people.

You say, all of that's well and good, but I'm no leader, not a leader. I'm just a regular anonymous Christian. I don't exert influence on anyone. Oh, yes you do. Yes, you do. Jesus said of all his true disciples in Matthew 5:13-16, You are, not must be. "You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out, trampled under people's feet."

Second illustration of what you are. "You are the light of the world." Not, try to be the light of the world. Not, you've really got to work hard to be the light of the world, but you are. The question is are you dim? 40-watt? Are you a 40-watt Christian or are you a 100-watt Christian? "You're the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, it gives light to all in the house."

In the same way, God has done that to you. You're a city set on a hill. You're a light that's put on a lampstand. Why? So you can give light to everybody in the house. Don't be a 40-watt. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works, give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Look, you may not think you're a leader, but if you're a Christian, you are one. I remember Charles Barkley used to say, "Yeah, I'm no role model." Oh, sorry, Charles Barkley, by being a really good basketball player, you are one. Doesn't matter what you say you're not, people are following you.

God has chosen you, Christian, for that purpose. That your salinity and luminosity will provide leadership to other people,

to unbelievers who need Christ and to believers, as well, who need to know how to follow Christ. They're looking to you.

We are a kingdom of priests, right? Revelation 1:6. Priests exist to bring people to God, that's what we do. So listen, all you fellow disciples of mine, you need to realize people are watching you. You are not anonymous. You are known. People are observing your life. They're taking note of how you live, how you speak, how you act, how you think, where you spend your time. They see the relationships that matter to you and which ones don't. They see what commitments you deem valuable to keep and which ones you don't ever put yourself on the hook to keep at all.

So it's imperative knowing that those who follow are being influenced by us and ought to be influenced by us. It's imperative we realize how we're influencing them. Since other Christians are watching our lives, we need to be examining ourselves, don't we? Regularly, daily to make sure we're not leading others astray, to make sure we're not a stumbling block to other people in their Christian life.

Remember what Jesus said about those who cause one of these little ones to stumble? Millstone around the neck? You ever seen a picture of a millstone grinding grain? It took animals, you know, donkeys and oxen, to turn that huge grinding stone, that millstone. You want one of those around your neck, chucked into the ocean? You won't die of drowning; I can guarantee that. You'll go down so quickly the weight of the water above you will crush you to death. It's a picture Jesus uses.

I think we need to be very careful about that. That's why Paul told Timothy, 1 Timothy 4:16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing, you'll save both yourself and your hearers." It's principles of discipleship: authority, humility fecundity, fidelity. They don't just apply to your teachers, who you follow. They apply to you. We must apply them to ourselves first.

Because in the wisdom of Christ, they're sufficient to expose, confront. They're sufficient to encourage and exhort. All of his disciples in all the various ages and stages of

Christian maturity. If we're going to do this discipleship, which Jesus is not only commending, but commanding, insisting upon, then all of us need to look ahead to a Paul or two in our life. We need to look behind us and identify some Timothys. Be intentional about that. We need to know one another, beloved. We need to be in each other's lives, intimately involved in one another's lives and homes and families. We're going to have more to say about all that in the coming weeks, but for now, let's close in prayer as we consider the Lord's Table in front of us.

Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for the teaching of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank you so much that he has drawn us into fellowship with you because of his perfect saving work on the cross. We would not be disciples were it not what he accomplished for us. Satisfying your holy wrath for our sins and living a perfect life that you used to cover us with. You've united us to Jesus Christ so his death counts for our death and his life covers our life. We are because of what you've done, Ephesians 1:6, we're accepted in the beloved. So it's our great opportunity to bring gratitude and joy to you by observing the Lord's Table.