

Gospels Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Four: Training of the Disciples, Part 1 – Matthew 10-17, John 6

The events of Matthew 10-17 are presented more topically than chronologically. They probably occurred between the end of Jesus' second year of ministry and sometime near the end of His third and final year. This period of ministry and the contents of Matthew 10-17 are also covered in Lessons 5 and 6.

Read Matthew 10. Jesus trained His disciples in a variety of ways. According to Matthew 10, He gave them practical ministry experience.

- 1) Compare Luke 6:12-16 with Matthew 10:1-4 and John 6:60-71 (note: while many *disciples* followed Jesus in the beginning, it was only later that Jesus appointed twelve of these disciples as *apostles*).
 - a) What information is given about the Twelve? **Their names: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, Thaddaeus (also known as Judas, son of James), Simon, and Judas Iscariot. Following a night spent in prayer, Jesus selected these twelve from all His disciples and designated them "apostles." The Twelve were sent out with His authority to preach and to heal. Jesus' apostles followed Him, even after many other disciples decided that Jesus' message was too offensive to accept (John 6:60).**
 - b) What decision did many of Jesus' followers eventually make, according to John 6:60-71? **After a year of inauguration in ministry (baptism, temptations, wedding in Cana, and rejection by His hometown) and a year of popularity after that (choosing and sending out disciples, many healings), Jesus' final year of ministry was a year of opposition. Some time near the end of His second year of ministry (probably several months after Jesus chose the Twelve and designated them "apostles"), He sent them out in pairs to communicate His message. Some time near the beginning of the third year of Jesus' ministry, many of His other followers (disciples) abandoned Him because they found His teachings too "hard" (offensive). As they turned away (John 6:66-70), Jesus' focus seems to have shifted from public ministry to training those who remained faithful to Him, the Twelve and other faithful disciples.**
- 2) "Apostle" means *sent*. Give the following information regarding Jesus' "sending out" of the Twelve:
 - a) The arrangement of the men (see Mark 6:7) **The Apostles were sent in twos (which may explain the reason Matthew names the twelve apostles in pairs)**
 - b) The people to whom they were sent on this particular occasion (see Matthew 10:5-6) **Israel (Jews only)**
 - c) The tasks they were commissioned to accomplish (see Matthew 10:7-8) **Preaching and healing**
 - d) A comparison of these tasks to Jesus' own ministry (compare Matthew 4:17 with 10:7 and Matthew 8-9 with 10:8) **The mission with which Jesus charged His apostles was identical to that of His own ministry: preaching and healing. They preached the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, healed the sick, raised the dead, and drove out demons.**
 - e) Things that were to be *higher priorities* than serving under pleasant and comfortable circumstances (Matthew 10) **Serving others (10:8), standing firm (10:22), dependence on the Lord for physical provisions (10:9-10), presentation of the message (10:7, 11-16), mental preparation for persecution (10:17-21), acknowledgment of Jesus (10:32-36), love of Christ (10:37), and willingness to lose one's life for Christ (10:38-39).**
- 3) Where would those who know you best say that you place ease and comfort in your list of priorities?
Personal sharing

Read Matthew 14:13-36 and 15:32-39 with John 6:5-24. Jesus trained His disciples through miracles.

- 4) Regarding the feeding of the 5000:
 - a) What background information does Mark 6:31-33 give about this event? **Jesus and His disciples were attempting to escape the crowds in order to be refreshed.**
 - b) What were Jesus' reasons for performing the miracle, according to Matthew 14:14 and John 6:5-10? **Jesus had compassion on the crowd, but he also intended to use this miracle to test His disciples.**
- 5) Why might Jesus have chosen to show the disciples that He could walk on water? **First, Jesus' control over the elements proved him to be divine (John 14:33). Secondly, Jesus taught Peter and the other disciples that faith without doubting is required to participate with Him in His work. We must keep our eyes on Him (John 14:31). Third, this miracle was a sign that nothing could separate Jesus' disciples from Him. The waves were not a sufficient barrier. He can reach us wherever we are. The disciples surely recalled and were comforted by this truth after Jesus returned to Heaven.**
- 6) Reread Matthew 14:33.
 - a) Considering the context of the verse, try to define the word "worship." **Worship was the response of the disciples to their awareness of Christ's deity. They became aware of His worthiness when He walked on water. They were confounded, amazed, and enlightened all at the same time. Their words were worshipful: "Truly you are the Son of God." Worship is any response of awe and amazement to the knowledge of the Holy One or God's self-revelation. Someone once said that worship is saying "wow" about God.**
 - b) Since the complete record of the Scriptures is God's self-revelation, we have the opportunity to know more about Jesus today than His disciples knew at the time of these miraculous events. Why do you think we are nevertheless slow, forgetful, or negligent in worshipping the Lord? **The believer's natural response to awareness of God's character and work is awe and worship. But our minds are often too distracted to ponder events and watch for God's involvement, or to meditate long on the meaning and wonder of the work and person of Christ in the Scriptures. Practicing the spiritual disciplines of silence, meditation, and study would cause us to worship more readily. Too often, noise, crowds, and hurry become obstacles to worship.**

Read Matthew 16:5-12 and John 6:25-71. Jesus trained His disciples by challenging their thinking and beliefs.

- 7) Compare Jesus' negative comments to His disciples in Matthew 16:6 and 12 concerning yeast with His use of yeast as a positive illustration in Matthew 13:33. How is the effect (power) of yeast a suitable analogy for the power of both good and evil? **A small amount of yeast permeates an entire batch of dough. A small influence of good or evil has the ability to permeate a culture.**
- 8) According to John's gospel, Jesus' feeding of 5000 and walking on water was immediately followed by His "Bread of Life" discourse (John 6:25-71). The response of the crowd and of Jesus' disciples shows that the discourse challenged their thinking and beliefs. Summarize the five questions the crowd asked Jesus in John 6:25-58 and Jesus' answer to each.
 - 1) John 6:25: *Question:* When did you get here? *Jesus' answer:* You are looking for a free meal instead of things with eternal value.
 - 2) John 6:28: *Question:* What works will save us? *Jesus' answer:* Belief, not works, is God's requirement for salvation.
 - 3) John 6:30: *Question:* Moses gave us manna. What miraculous sign will you give us to prove your authority? *Jesus' answer:* It was not Moses but God the Father who gave you manna. He has now given you bread from heaven that gives life to the world. I am that bread.
 - 4) John 6:42: *Question:* How can Jesus make such claims (for example, that God is His Father and that He came from Heaven) when He is merely the son of Joseph? *Jesus' answer:* Jesus ignored their judgment of Him and instead, pointed them toward belief in Him.

5) John 6:52: *Question*: How can we eat Jesus' flesh? *Jesus' answer*: Eternal life comes by eating (appropriating/believing in) Jesus' life-giving and atoning flesh and blood (which would be sacrificed on the Cross).

- 9) The crowd asked Jesus about the works God requires (6:28). Jesus' answer in 6:29 also explains the mystery of how one "feeds on" Him (6:57, see also 6:40, 47). Find Jesus' answer in these verses and give a *specific example* of how you must perform your most important work by "feeding on" Jesus today? **We "feed on" Jesus by believing in Him. Our first and most important job each day is to believe in Him for each and every need. Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 16:13-28. Jesus trained His disciples by challenging their thinking and beliefs.

- 10) Consider Matthew 16:17 with Matthew 11:25, 13:11, John 6:65, and 1 Corinthians 2:10, 14. How does a person ascertain spiritual truth? **Our sin-crippled minds can only perceive spiritual truth by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit of God.**
- 11) Read John 1:41 and 6:14-15 with Matthew 16:15-18.
- In what sense is Peter's confession (Matthew 16:16) the foundation upon which Christ's church rests? **Peter confessed Jesus to be Messiah. The salvation of every individual and the foundation of the Christ's Church rest on an accurate understanding of the person and work of Jesus, the Christ of God.**
 - According to John 6:15, what expectation did the Jews have of the Messiah (see also Isaiah 9:7)? **The Jews expected the Messiah to be a political deliverer, a king who would free them from Roman domination and establish a permanent and prosperous kingdom, such as the one they had known in the days of David and Solomon.**
 - According to Matthew 16:21 and John 18:36, how did their expectation line up with God's plan for Jesus' first advent? **Jesus came to earth to suffer, die, and be raised to life on the third day. He said that His kingdom was not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one.**
 - Compare Matthew 16:21 with 16:27. In what way was Jesus challenging the thinking and beliefs of His disciples (and Jewish religious thought) concerning the Messiah? **First, the Jews had apparently ignored prophecy that the Messiah would suffer (Isaiah 53) and therefore, Jesus' prediction of His death shocked the disciples (Matthew 16:22). Secondly, the Jews assumed that all the events foretold concerning Messiah would happen at once, not in stages, and certainly not in two separate advents with thousands of years passing between them.**
- 12) How has the Spirit of Christ been challenging *your* thinking about who He is? **Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 17. Jesus trained His disciples by challenging their thinking and beliefs.

- 13) How did the Transfiguration, described in Matthew 17:1-8, fulfill the prediction Jesus made in Matthew 16:28? **Peter, James and John were privileged to enjoy a foretaste of the kingdom to come and witness the glory Jesus would have after His resurrection. In this sense, they "saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28), as Jesus had predicted.**
- 14) How did the Transfiguration validate what Jesus taught the disciples in Matthew 16:21-27? **The things Jesus had recently told them concerning His death and losing one's life only to find it (Matthew 16:21, 24-26), were validated when they saw the glorified Jesus. He had said He would die, but glory lay beyond His death!**
- 15) Reread John 6:27b with Matthew 17:5.
- From where does Christ's authority come? **God the Father**
 - Considering Christ's authority and desire to transform *your* thinking as His disciple, what practical steps could you take to improve your ability to "listen to Him" (Matthew 17:5)? **Spiritual disciplines of solitude, silence, meditation, study, and prayer greatly enhance our ability to listen and hear God's voice. Personal sharing**