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Lesson 4 – The Disciples

The Gospel for Immature People

Text: Acts 4:5-13

Spending time with someone a lot normally results in their rubbing off on you. Sometimes you pick up their quirks and mannerisms, words they say a lot somehow start slipping out of your mouth too, and the two of you start seeing the world more and more similarly.

Proverbs speaks of this phenomenon, both positively (Proverbs 13:20) and negatively (Proverbs 22:24-25). While this certainly true on a human level, it is also true in our relationship with Christ. The more time we spend with Him, the more His character will rub off on us.

Spend time with Jesus, because doing so will change you.

I. Christ makes spiritually dull people wise (4:11).

A. The disciples before Pentecost.

1. The disciples failed to understand the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 15:10-20; 16:5-12; Mark 6:52; 8:14-21; John 4:38-41; John 14:5, 8, 22; 16:17-18).
2. The disciples failed to understand the purpose of Jesus (Mark 9:31-32; Luke 9:44-45; 18:31-34).

B. The disciples after Pentecost.

The difference between the disciples after Christ's resurrection is astonishing. Peter expertly quotes the Old Testament to make decisions and argue for Christ in Acts 1, 2, 3, and 4. Not only that, we find that this ragtag group became the standard for teaching for over 3,000 people (Acts 2:42).

C. The expectation for all believers (Hebrews 5:11-6:2; 2 Peter 3:18).

The apostles had a very unique role to play for which they were specially empowered. God expects all of His children, however, to be growing in wisdom and to be ready even to teach.

II. Christ makes self-focused people God focused (4:10-12).

A. The disciples before Pentecost.

The disciples regularly bickered over who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matthew 18:1; 20:20-21; Mark 9:33-34; 10:35-37; Luke 9:46; 22:24). Sometimes, there timing couldn't have been any worse, like the night before Christ would die (Luke 22:24). Their love for their Savior and commitment to Him was mixed with a poisonous love for self and glory.

B. The disciples after Pentecost.

We never hear of the disciples arguing or allowing their ego to get in the way after the birth of the church. It would appear that the last time this was an issue was the night before Christ was crucified. Remembering the diverse nature of the group makes this especially

impressive. Rather, their focus is entirely on Jesus Christ and on building His kingdom, not theirs.

C. The expectation for all believers (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The more you love someone, the more you delight in their success. Often sacrifice is put in terms of what you are giving up, but if your focus is on what you are giving up, you'll become discouraged. If your focus is on your friend and Him getting what He deserves, you are more likely to joyfully sacrifice what it takes.

III. Christ makes cowardly people bold people (4:13).

A. The disciples before Pentecost (Mark 14:50, 66-72).

In Christ's time of greatest need, all of His disciples fled from Him. John is the only disciple we know of who was actually at the cross when Christ died. Peter famously denied even knowing Christ three times. The group continued to be uncertain and fearful, even after they knew Christ rose (Matthew 28:17; John 20:19).

B. The disciples after Pentecost.

The change after Pentecost couldn't have been more stark. They preached with boldness, not fearing the actual threats of the leaders. They continued to preach, even after some of their own were killed for doing so. The reason for their boldness is specifically given as their time with Jesus.

C. The expectation for all believers (Philippians 1:27-28).

God expects all of us to be bold in our faith. Boldness comes as a result of knowing who it is that we are

taking a stand for. You very easily stand up for something you believe in, even in the face of mockery from others. Once again, the more you love Christ, the more you will change to be like Him.

Two final questions

1. How can I have a relationship with Someone I can't see?

Scripture recognizes the difficulty of loving someone you can't see (1 Peter 1:8). Christ promises to be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20), but how does this work? Christ is present with us primarily through His Spirit (Romans 8:9, 1 Peter 1:11) and His Word (Colossians 3:16). Every relationship is built on communication. This includes our talking to God (prayer) and His talking to us (Scripture) (John 15:7).

2. How quick will this be?

Remember, Christ spent three and a half years with the disciples, and it wasn't until the very end that they really got it. Unlike them, we have the help of the Spirit from the start today, but even still many of these changes occur slowly over time. Living in a culture that wants instant everything, it is important to recognize that often the most important changes in your life take place over the long haul, by taking 30 minutes every day to be in God's Word and prayer.