



Discipleship **Ideas for the Iowa District West**

Introduction

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - SERIES A

September 6, 2015

From C.P.H. About the Cover: A man whose ears were closed, whose tongue was tied. A man cut off from the world God created him to enjoy. Jesus speaks His “Be opened” over this man, and suddenly he can both hear and speak clearly! The Lord still uses His Gospel to open our ears to hear, our hearts to believe His promises, and our mouths to proclaim His praise.

First Reading **Isaiah 35:4–7a**

⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Pointing ahead to the fulfillment of the Messiah’s coming, Isaiah gave encouragement to the people of Israel that God was coming to save them. He pointed to how the Messiah would perform miracles and how even nature itself would know and feel the mercies of God. So what application can we glean from this reading? The answer to that lies in the response of the lame man, the muted tongue and nature itself. The response is in rejoicing in the mercies of God and in praise for His deliverance. It lies in living in the encouragement God offers us in His eternal promises.

Epistle Reading James 2:1–10, 14–18

¹My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it...

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: Martin Luther referred to James as the Epistle of Straw. That is because he was fully aware of the fact that we are saved (justified) by God's grace alone through faith alone as revealed to us in Scripture alone. James' epistle, however, seems to contradict that clear teaching of Scripture. In truth, James' epistle confirms it clarifying that when one has faith given by God's grace through the Scriptures, he/she is going to have works. They will be evident. This reading holds significant evidence that works do proceed from the heart of a true believer. Specific applications can easily be gleaned from this reading.

Gospel Reading: Mark 7:31–37

³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³²And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. ³⁴And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷And they

were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: In this Gospel reading we see the marvel of God in the healing of this deaf man who upon being given hearing was able to also speak plainly. The response to this was that the people were astonished beyond measure and were boldly proclaiming the wonder and awe of God as was revealed in this miracle. If there is a particular application to this text that should stand out, it ought to be that instead of little or no response to God's love and mercy for sinful mankind and personally for any one of us, there ought to be a great deal of zealous proclamation of God's goodness. Because of His rich grace, we can all boldly make such proclamation as this man and the people who witnessed did. Instead of saying or doing little or nothing to honor God with our lips, we can find the miracles of everyday life and boldly give honor to God for them.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read **Isaiah 35:4–7a**

⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

1. Why does anyone have an anxious heart?
2. If God comes with vengeance and recompense, should we not be even more anxious?
3. How will the mercy of God be evidenced in His coming and what does it point to?
4. How does even nature respond to the mercy of God?
5. What does this suggest about how we should respond to God's mercy?
6. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read **James 2:1–10, 14–18**

¹My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

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¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

7. How might we show partiality in the Church today?
8. How is verse 10 such an important verse for people?
9. How does verse 17 affect you personally?
10. What is meant by the words of James in verse 18?
11. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Mark 7:31–37

³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³²And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. ³⁴And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

12. The word "Ephphatha" is an Aramaic word, which was the common language of the people. Is that significant?
13. What is something significant about the outcome of this miracle that testifies to the fact that is truly is an act of divine power?
14. Why did Jesus charge the witnesses of this event not to talk about it?
15. Why did they zealously proclaim it then?
16. What might that suggest to us today when we stop to pay attention to God's gifts of grace in our own lives?
17. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

Read **Isaiah 35:4–7a**

⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." ⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

1. Why does anyone have an anxious heart?

The people of Isaiah's day were feeling lost and afraid because the world around them was no longer secure and their lives were in jeopardy because of their national situation. They had left the security of being near God and felt as though they were lost forever. The same is true for so many people today. They feel alone and apart from God and thus possess an anxious heart.

2. If God comes with vengeance and recompense, should we not be even more anxious?

Yes we should, because we know we deserve nothing but temporal and eternal punishment.

3. How will the mercy of God be evidenced in His coming and what does it point to?

Through His miracles of healing which pointed to the coming of the Messiah.

4. How does even nature respond to the mercy of God?

For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

5. What does this suggest about how we should respond to God's mercy?

We should rejoice and praise God for all His benefits to us rather than sit in silence and have little or no response to His goodness.

6. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read: **James 2:1–10, 14–18**

¹My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears

the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

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7. How might we show partiality in the Church today?

By acknowledging some over others simply because we feel more comfortable with them than we do with people who are different from us or whom we do not know.

8. How is verse 10 such an important verse for people?

It serves as a reminder that all people are sinful and unclean and in need of God's mercy and forgiveness.

9. How does verse 17 affect you personally?

Answers will vary.

10. What is meant by the words of James in verse 18?

Works of faith will always follow one who is saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. It is a byproduct of faith. The two cannot be separated.

11. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Mark 7:31–37

³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³²And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. ³⁴And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” ³⁵And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

12. The word “Ephphatha” is an Aramaic word, which was the common language of the people. Is that significant?

Yes. God comes to us through His Word, but His Word must come to us in our heart language and in the manner in which He can best convey His love and mercy which is not personally conveyed in words we seldom use or fail to understand.

13. What is something significant about the outcome of this miracle that testifies to the fact that is truly is an act of divine power?

The man was not only cured of his deafness, but without any reconditioning or speech therapy was able to speak clearly.

14. Why did Jesus charge the witnesses of this event not to talk about it?

He knew that the time the kind of proclamation they were making was not yet. Too much of this kind of acclaim would act against His mission before He would go to the cross.

15. Why did they zealously proclaim it then?

It is what people do when they are moved by something. Obviously they were rejoicing over what the Savior had done. It was only natural to do so in spite of the fact that Jesus urged them not to.

16. What might that suggest to us today when we stop to pay attention to God’s gifts of grace in our own lives?

It should suggest that in those common miracles we experience daily, we too should rejoice and proclaim the Savior.

17. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

What kind of response do you offer when you witness the everyday miracles of God? The sun shines brightly and flowers bloom and water comes right into our homes so that we can drink freely and safely and all of these are miracles. How do we respond to such things? God's people are to rejoice and be glad, to proclaim the wonders of His might. The greatest miracle is that of our salvation, and even that often gets overlooked and unnoticed or acknowledged. By God's grace may we zealously proclaim the wonders of our God.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty and Everlasting God, we thank You for the wonders of Your might. Day after day You shower us with those wonders and yet often we overlook and even neglect to acknowledge these gift as having come from You. In Your mercy, grant us grace to grow in our appreciation for the miracles of each day and for Your loving kindness in providing them for us. Fill us with awe and appreciation for all that we are and have received from You. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**