



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.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - SERIES C

April 17, 2016

From C.P.H. About the Cover: Sheep know the voice of their shepherd. When sheep in the field hear their shepherd, they come at his call. As people of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we hear His voice and come at His call. His voice comes to us though His Word and Sacraments. “God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1–2 ESV). Thanks be to God!

First Reading; Acts 20:17–35

¹⁷Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am

innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Paul recognizes the difficulty that stares him in the face with an arrest and imprisonment because of his testimony of Jesus Christ. Seldom is that the case for the majority of modern disciples in the United States. Yet what would happen if modern disciples were more willing to profess Christ as Paul did in the public square and before the equivalent of Jews and Greeks in our culture? Paul encouraged Christians to pay careful attention to the false teachers that will arise among believers and to stay alert to keeping the true faith. Herein lies an application to our modern lives. Because of God's grace and every powerful blessing is us, we can be more interested in professing Christ and more diligent about avoiding false teaching by remaining alert to keeping the true faith.

Epistle Reading Revelation 7:9-17

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Epistle Discipleship Notes: John's revelation depicted a glorious scene of heaven in which all the saints existed to serve God in the shelter of His presence where all tears of sorrow would be removed and all needs would be fulfilled. It sounds wonderful! In truth it already is. Heaven for us is secured and we, along with all the saints of heaven have begun to experience God's glory and majesty in this life here on earth. Because of Christ's resurrection from the dead, we are secured in the promised shelter of Christ and as believers, our tears are already wiped away and our needs are met. Therefore we can serve Christ even in this life joyfully and gladly in our various vocations, trusting the in doing so, much can be accomplished to His glory.

Gospel Reading: John 10:22-30

²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."
²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.
²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: How frustrating it must have been for the Savior to have constantly encountered those who would not believe His Word or believe His divine power that was displayed in the miracles He performed in His Father's name. But that is the case for those who fail to listen to the voice of the shepherd and who receive eternal life and security in the hand of our Savior. The most obvious application of this Gospel reading is that of listening intensely to the voice of the Savior through His Word so that we experience the joy of knowing we are securely kept and protected by Him for an eternity. A less obvious application is that of living in this security is something that frees us to serve Him joyfully and willingly here and now and offering Him ourselves, our talents and our treasures.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read Acts 20:17–35

¹⁷Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

1. What two concerns were the constant testimonies of Paul according to verse 21?
2. How could this result in imprisonment and afflictions?
3. What was Paul’s primary concern for the future of the believers and elders of Ephesus?
4. What did Paul say he had shown the elders regarding mercy and service?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read Revelation 7:9–17

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and

they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

6. What does this vision of the multitude evoke in your mind about heaven?
7. What is the significance of the white robes?
8. What is meant by the "great tribulation" in verse 14?
9. Imagine the comfort depicted in verses 15-17 and what does that evoke in your mind about heaven?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

Read John 10:22-30

²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."

11. What is known about the Feast of Dedication?
12. Why were the two questions in verse 24 unnecessary?
13. What does it take to believe and become a part of the Savior's flock?
14. How does the promise of verse 29 make you feel?
15. 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 Acts 20:17–35

¹⁷Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

1. What two concerns were the constant testimonies of Paul according to verse 21?

Repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. How could this result in imprisonment and afflictions?

It was in strong opposition to the Jewish teachings which proved to be more antagonistic than anyone would have expected, especially since Paul brought large contributions to Jerusalem hoping to win over the opposition to the teachings of Christ.

3. What was Paul's primary concern for the future of the believers and elders of Ephesus?

False teaching among the believers from deceptive teachers. Therefore he encouraged them to keep alert.

4. What did Paul say he had shown the elders regarding mercy and service?

In verse 35 Paul wrote, “In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

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

Read: Revelation 7:9–17

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

6. What does this vision of the multitude evoke in your mind about heaven?

Answers will vary.

7. What is the significance of the white robes?

White is the emblem of victory and righteousness. It was also the color of robes worn by priest and princes which God’s people are called in 1 Peter 2:9.

8. What is meant by the “great tribulation” in verse 14?

There are a number of ideas about what is meant by the “great tribulation”. The clearest understanding of the phrase is best articulated in Acts 4:22 where we read, “we must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God.” The vision here is surely not of those who will come safe out of some particular trials, but of the great multitude from every age and every race who waged war against sin, and who, in the midst of that prolonged conflict, endured the great tribulation which is to continue until Christ’s return.

9. Imagine the comfort depicted in verses 15-17 and what does that evoke in your mind about heaven?

Answers will vary.

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

READ: John 10:22–30

²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."
²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."

11. What is known about the Feast of Dedication?

The Feast of Dedication, also known today as Hanukkah, once also called "Feast of the Maccabees," was a Jewish festival observed for eight days from the 25th of Kislev (usually in December, but occasionally late November, due to the lunisolar calendar).

12. Why were the two questions in verse 24 unnecessary?

They were unnecessary because Jesus always made himself known in public with both his message and his miracles.

13. What does it take to believe and become a part of the Savior's flock?

It takes listening to the Savior's shepherding voice and following Him. This is done through hearing His Word and growing in the faith of the Gospel.

14. How does the promise of verse 29 make you feel?

Answers will vary

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

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

Christ makes it known who He is by not only His Word, but His powerful miracles and yet people still fail to know Him or believe Him. Paul predicts his arrest and the trials of life that lay before him and John depicts the beauty and marvelous numbers of the saints in heaven. These readings encompass a stark reality of who they are who will be with Christ forever in heaven. They are they who have survived the great tribulation in faith because they have listened to the voice of the Good Shepherd. As modern disciples it behooves us to listen carefully to God's Word and to avoid false teaching. By God's grace we can do so because we are blessed with the means of His grace to grant faith and bless us in that faith.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty God, You have made Yourself known in Your miraculous power and in the power of Your Word. Grant us Your grace to listen to the voice of Your Word and to grow in faith and conviction to remain true to Your Word. Fill us with the blessing of receiving Your help and strength to remain faithful as we pass through the great tribulations of this life until we can join the multitude of saints with You in heaven. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**