

# DEVOTED TO THE WORDS OF JESUS

Dowlan Road, November 1, 2009 PM

## Introduction

- A. Turn to John 8.
  - 1. The incident recorded in the early part of this chapter is ugly. The enemies of Jesus confront Him in the temple, dragging along a woman they caught in the act of adultery. It appears to be a setup these men had plotted in order to entrap Jesus. He's not having any of it. After exposing their evil – which forced them to leave the scene in shame, Jesus gently rebukes the woman and sends her on her way with the instruction that she should sin no more.
  - 2. But evidently this ugly scene had drawn a crowd. Not willing to let the opportunity pass, Jesus seizes the moment and teaches them (John 8:12). Critics remained in the crowd and harassed Jesus throughout His sermon. But He answered every challenge they raised. Ultimately, what began as an ugly scene had a wonderful outcome (John 8:30).
  
- B. But it is the next verse where I want to concentrate our attention.
  - 1. It was not enough to simply accept that Jesus was who He claimed to be. If they were to be authentic disciples, something more would be required of them (John 8:31-32).
  - 2. This idea of being a true disciple has been at the heart of our fall focus. It is really just another way of describing a person who is devoted to Jesus. In this passage Jesus presents us with another measure of authentic disciple. True disciples do not simply say that they believe in Jesus. They demonstrate their faith by continuing in His word. If we are truly devoted to Jesus, then we must be devoted to His word.
  - 3. Let's not be too quick to leave that point without spelling out what it means. How does a disciple demonstrate a devotion to God's word? We will mention three things in this lesson.

## Study His Word

- A. Don't miss the vital link that exists between discipleship and study. The two are inseparable.
  - 1. A disciple is a student or learner. In the Greek world the great philosophers would have their group of students who followed them around and absorbed their every word. As disciples of Jesus, our task is to sit at the feet of our Master and allow Him to teach us. This is what being a disciple is all about – learning from the Master. Fundamentally, we are students.
  - 2. However, unlike the disciples of Jesus' day, we cannot go sit at the feet of Jesus. The only way we can be taught is through His word. Now we can see the importance of Bible study. It goes to the core of what a disciple seeks to do – learn from the Teacher. The only way I'm going to learn from Jesus and thus be His disciple is through a careful study of His teaching found in the Bible.
  
- B. Because this is true, we are blessed to live at a time when there are so many opportunities to be taught the words of Jesus. Have you ever stopped to consider just how many opportunities we have?
  - 1. There are some obvious things that quickly come to mind: sermons like these twice a week and Bible classes twice a week.
  - 2. But there are so many more opportunities. There are special classes and devotions for ladies, moms, teenagers, college kids, young couples, married couples, private home studies. There is something like this virtually every week. There are videos and materials offered on the website for further study. There is a Bible reading schedule in the update every week.
  - 3. But the resources are not limited to the things we do. With sound churches around us, there are gospel meetings to attend. There are all kinds of resources available on the internet. There are libraries of books that can be read, cds of the Bible we can play in our car and DVDs to watch at home on our TV. We can even load up our ipod with the Bible text and listen while we work out.
  - 4. I've not mentioned the most obvious. We all have a Bible, perhaps several. Some of us even have one on our phone.
  - 5. I could go on...but the point is the resources are seemingly endless and easily accessible to us.
  
- C. But here's the question: do I use it? Do I take advantage of all the opportunities easily available to me to learn the words of Jesus?
  - 1. How odd that at this time when we have more opportunity than ever before to study, disciples actually study less. The resources go untapped. The Bible sits on the back seat of the car all week. Meetings are attended by only a small number. All of our electronic devices are used for other activities.
  - 2. Let's not lose sight of what is at risk – nothing less than authentic discipleship. If I'm going to be a true disciple, I must continue in His word. To continue in His word, I have to study His words.
  - 3. It comes down to desire; I've got to want this (1 Peter 2:1-3). Finding the longing again starts with a decision. I have to decide that I will not settle for being a disciple in name only. I want the real thing. I'm going to be a true disciple of Jesus.

## Apply His Word

- A. Why do we study the Bible? What is the objective?
  - 1. Colossians 1:9-12. In verse 9 we see Bible study. We are filled with the knowledge of God's will as we carefully study His word. But this is not where it ends. Paul goes on to spell out what we should do with this knowledge. Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. I should use my knowledge to live my life in a way that pleases Him, in everything I do. I should bear fruit. I should grow stronger and more resolute. My knowledge is supposed to change the way I live.
  - 2. 1 Thessalonians 4:1. These disciples were doing it right – using what they had learned to live in a way that pleased the Lord. Paul tells them to keep on doing it.
  - 3. 1 John 4. Here it is stated simply. God commands that we walk in truth.

- B. As disciples, this must be the objective of all our study.
  1. Let's be clear about what we are trying to do. We don't urge people to read their Bible or attend Bible class simply to fulfill an obligation. It's not even about filling our minds with knowledge.
  2. This learning is supposed to change me. I must think about this as I study. When I sit in Bible class or listen to sermons, I need to be thinking: How does this apply to me? How should these truths change my life? When I do my private reading, I need to be asking: How can I use these things I'm learning in this text?
  3. Keep in mind that this will not always be easy. It's easy to see the relevance in some passages (Proverbs 20:1). But not all passages are this way. Sometimes we may struggle through a reading, class or sermon to find a point of application for our lives. But this is the hard work of authentic disciples. We labor to find the application of God's word in our lives.

## Respect His Word

- A. The disciple's challenge is not just to learn God's word and apply it. We must also respect the limits that God's word imposes (II John 7-11). There are three things to note in verse 9.
  1. First, the teaching of Jesus imposes a boundary. Everything we teach and practice must be authorized by His word.
  2. Second, we are not supposed to cross that boundary. In fact, John makes this point twice: Don't go too far; abide in the teaching of Christ.
  3. Third, to ignore this admonition and cross the line is serious business. To cross the lines puts our relationship with God in jeopardy.
  4. We see this same principle in other places (Deuteronomy 4:2; Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19). These scriptures confirm that this boundary exists and crossing has the most serious consequences.
- B. And yet, religious people around us ignore the boundary all the time.
  1. Some say: *"There is nothing wrong with baptizing infants. The Bible never says we cannot do it."*
    - a. However, the Bible did tell us who should be baptized (Acts 8:36-37) and infants are not part of this group.
    - b. To practice infant baptism goes beyond the teaching of Christ. When we do this, we've gone too far.
  2. Others say: *"There is nothing wrong with using instrumental music in worship. The New Testament never says we cannot use it."*
    - a. However, the Bible does tell us how to worship (John 4:24; Colossians 3:16) and instrumental music is never included in those instructions.
    - b. To use it in our worship goes beyond the teaching of Christ. If we do this, we have gone too far.
  3. Still others say: *"I think we ought to build a gym out back and offer more recreational activities for our young people. The Bible never says we cannot do this."*
    - a. However, the Bible does tell us what work churches are supposed to do (I Timothy 3:15; Philippians 4:15-16). Organizing and funding recreational activities for teenagers is not part of those instructions.
    - b. If we do this as a church, we have gone too far.
- C. When people go beyond what Jesus authorized, no matter how well intentioned, they have gone too far. Those who are devoted to Jesus will not only study and apply His word; they will also respect its limits.

## Conclusion: Blessed By His Word

- A. We have seen that going beyond the words of Jesus has the most devastating consequences.
- B. But we should also appreciate that continuing in His word carries an equally wonderful promise (John 8:32). Freedom from the bondage of sin will only be experienced by those who know and obey truth.
- C. Have you done that?