

Week 2

## JAMAICA BAPTIST UNION MISSION AGENCY

### MISSION MONTH BIBLE STUDY OUTLINES

**Theme:** Partnering with God; Fulfilling God's Mission

Week 2

**Topic:** Discipleship Matters

**Texts:** Acts 2:42-47 & 16:4-51

**Objective:** To explore the importance of discipleship to the believer in his or her faith walk.

**Setting the Stage:** If you want to learn how to become a good mechanic or fashion designer, where would you go for lessons and why?

#### BIBLICAL BLURB

The Greek word **mathētés (μαθητής)** from which we get “disciple” refers to a pupil, one who learns from another. In our context, it speaks to “one who accepts and assist in spreading the doctrines of another, e.g. Christianity” <sup>1</sup>

A combination of “disciple” with the suffix “-ship” would seem to suggest that **discipleship** speaks to the skill or ability in making disciples. This was what Jesus had in mind, when he told His disciples to go and “make disciples” (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). It is important to note that disciples are “made,” not born. It is a deliberate process that involves time and effort. Furthermore, in order to make disciples, one must first be a disciple. Just as it is not the norm for a plumber to train someone to become a mechanic, nor for a dentist to train one to become a pilot, it is impossible for one who is not a disciple to train or make disciples of others.

According to Acts 2, when the disciples started to share the word of God and people were responding to the message, they then set about fulfilling the mission of God by discipling the new converts. Those who the Spirit added to the church daily, were not left on their own.

In Acts 2:42-47 we read that those that were being added met for: -

- The teaching ministry of the church
- Fellowship
- The breaking of bread
- Prayer
- Taking care of the needs of others

These activities became part of the curriculum for discipleship in the early church. Let us explore the importance of these in shaping those who come to faith in Christ.

## TEACHING POINTS

### **1. The teaching ministry of the church (v. 42)**

It did not matter whether it was 3,000 persons or one person that was added to the church; these persons were coming to a new faith and would be ignorant of what was required of them. If these persons were expected to be devoted to Christ, they would need to know about Him and His teachings. If they were going to be involved in making disciples, they had to become good disciples too. The principles of the faith must be passed on to the new disciple in discipleship.

Sadly, too often our emphasis is on seeking to win “the 3,000” without any plans for teaching them. Often, our evangelistic efforts lacks a vital balance between the emotional content and our nurturing commitment. This results in many new converts being neglected or they themselves, ignoring the teaching ministry of the church.

It is our duty as disciples to help others into developing an appetite for learning as much as they can about the beliefs and teachings of the faith. This will require attendance to new members’ classes and Bible studies. The Word of God is food for the child of God, and is essential for our growth and maturity in the faith.

### **2. Fellowship (v.42)**

As the new converts were added with their different ethnic and social challenges, they found themselves among people with common interests. The Greek word **koinonea** means “fellowship” or “to share in common.” It meant that they were to be united in everything, seeing one another as part of one body (1 Cor. 12:12-31). The concept is present in verse 44 “*All the believers were together and had everything in common.*” The disciple of Christ must know that he/she is part of a fellowship of believers that ought to grow together in love and unity, and as such should not neglect their coming together as one (Heb. 10:25). The strength of the church is dependent on the fellowship of the believers. Jesus’ priestly prayer was about the oneness of the His followers (John 17:21)

### **3. The Breaking of bread (v.42)**

This practice is central to the Christian faith and overtime has been celebrated as the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper reminds us of God's love, demonstrated in Jesus giving His life for us so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. Each time we celebrate its observance we are given the opportunity to examine ourselves, confess our sins and thank God for His gift of salvation. We are children of God not because of what we have done but because of what Christ Jesus has done for us. The observance of the Lord's Supper should not be trivialized, but should be seen as integral to the life of every believer.

### **4. Prayer (v.42)**

Developing a prayer life is essential for the growth of every child of God and is to be seen as a normal and necessary activity for disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, communicating with God through prayer must be taught early to the new disciple. He or she should understand that prayers should not be seen as a last resort when there is a problem, but should be a way of life. Personal, family and corporate prayer life should be encouraged.

In prayers the child of God spends time speaking with God and listening to God as God speaks to him/her.-; Prayer is a two-way communication and is one way a child of God deepens his/her relationship with God.

### **5. Seeing to the needs of others (v.45)**

It was evident that there were those in the large number of converts who had particular needs. Those who were in a position to respond to such needs did so. The idea of course was that the church cared for those in their midst. The lesson being taught to the new disciples was that just as how Jesus showed love and compassion, they were expected to make a difference in the lives of others. They were being taught that they were to share their blessings and gifts with others, so that others could be blessed.

### **Summary**

The Apostle Paul was an itinerant preacher, a missionary who was always on the move, but he would revisit the places he had earlier shared the gospel, with a view to strengthen their faith (Acts 16:4-5). In addition to this he would write letters to them, to encourage them even in times of persecution and struggle.

The aim of discipleship is to equip persons for growth in order that they may fulfil their mission and become faithful witnesses. It is to ensure that the fruits borne would last.

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."* (John 15:16 NIV)

Notice the methods in the passages above:

- The people came together for teaching, fellowship, prayer, holy communion; they were learning that which was essential to the faith. This was for building the church and for personal growth.
- Paul maintained contact with those whom he led to Christ. Even when he was in prison he would write letters to them.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What kind of discipleship ministry or program do we have in our church?
- How can we ensure that the fruits we bear remain connected to the Vine?
- Do we maintain personal contact with those we lead to Christ or do we see such as the responsibility of the Pastor only?
- What happens when we fail to disciple others?

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<sup>1</sup> (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple>)