

Discipling the “Common People”



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Luke 2:21–28; Matthew 15:32–39; Matthew 16:13–17; Luke 12:6, 7; Luke 13:1–5; James 2:1–9.

MEMORY VERSE: “One day Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. There he saw Simon [Peter] and his brother Andrew. They were throwing a net into the lake. They were fishermen. ‘Come. Follow me,’ Jesus said. ‘I will make you fishers of people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him” (Mark 1:16–18, NlrV).

CHRIST’S DEATH SHOWED THAT WE ALL ARE SINNERS WHO NEED GOD’S GRACE.¹ In light of the Cross, all differences crumble. But sometimes in our soul winning we forget this important truth, and we especially try to win those who might be thought of as “honorable” or “great” in the eyes of the world.

This was not so with Jesus. He understood and saw the meaninglessness and emptiness of worldly greatness and honor. In fact, in many cases, it was the most “successful” people who troubled Him the most—people such as the powerful Pharisees, the wealthy Sadducees, and the rich Romans. In contrast, the “ordinary” people generally came to Him and accepted Him. These people were carpenters, fishermen, farmers, housewives, shepherds, soldiers, and servants, as well as others.

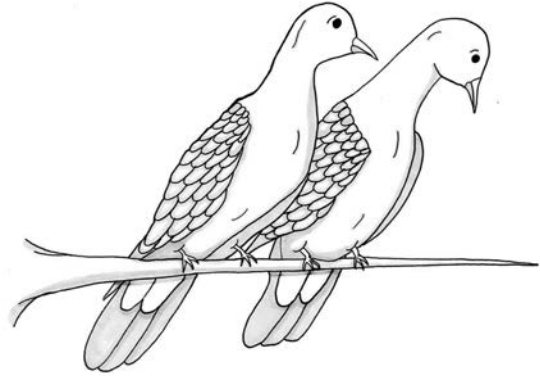
1. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 2**HUMBLE BEGINNINGS**
(Luke 2:21–28)

Read Luke 2:21–28; Mark 6:2–4; and Leviticus 12:8. What do these verses tell us about the economic class into which Jesus was born? How would that class have influenced His ministry (work done for God)?

Joseph and Mary’s offering clearly indicated their poor background. The Mosaic law required that a lamb be brought for this offering. However, a merciful law had been provided for very poor people who could not afford the lamb offering (Leviticus 12:8). The poor could substitute turtledoves or pigeons. So, from His birth in a stable to the offerings given by His parents, Jesus is shown as a human living in the home of poor and “common” people. In fact, archaeological² proof also shows that Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth was a poor and unimportant town. Carpentry is an honorable trade. But it certainly did not put Jesus among the rich.

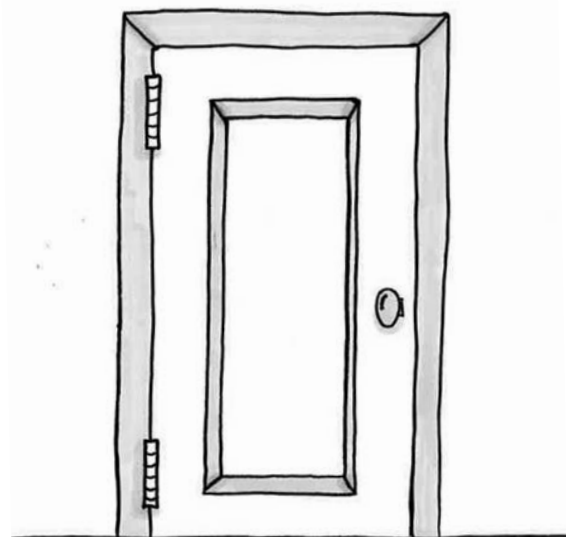
“The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily work. Jesus knew what it meant to be poor. This experience protected Him. In His busy life, Jesus had no lazy moments to invite temptation. No lazy hours opened the way for wrongful influences. So far as possible, Jesus closed the door to the tempter [Satan]. Nothing could tempt Him to permit a



Joseph and Mary’s offering showed just how poor they were.

wrong act. Jesus was wise to see evil, and He was strong enough to say no to it.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 72.

The Creator of all that was made (read John 1:1–3) became a human baby. But He also was born into the home of a poor family! How should this wonderful truth make us feel?



So far as possible, Jesus closed the door to the tempter.

2. archaeological (from archaeology)—ancient things dug out from below the ground.

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 3**CHANGING THE “COMMON”
(John 2:1–11)**

Read John 2:1–11 and Matthew 15:32–39. How did Jesus use simple, everyday desires and needs to make disciples and change lives?

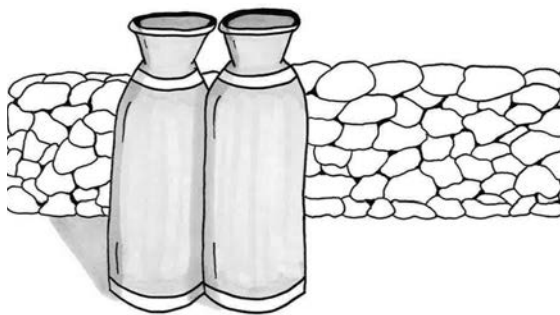
Common people often share natural physical, emotional, and social desires. They want to eat, to have friends, and to feel important. Jesus understood these desires. He put Himself in places that gave Him opportunities to reach people through these desires.

Jesus changed water into unfermented (without alcohol) wine from the fruit of the vine. He turned fishermen into preachers (Mark 1:16–18). He was very good at changing common people into powerful workers for God. But people often questioned Jesus’ authority (Mark 6:3). They wondered why He lived modestly and did not own expensive things like other rich and powerful people did. They expected a powerful person to have these sorts of things. And when Jesus did not, they overlooked Him.

So often Jesus looked for people who were thought to be common by others. Because they were so “common,” they were prepared to trust God completely for their success. People who are rich, powerful, and famous often forget their need for something greater than themselves. What a horrible lie! Many people during Christ’s time were very rich, powerful, and well-educated. But their

names have long been forgotten. Meanwhile, common people such as farmers, fishermen, carpenters, shepherds, potters, housewives, and house servants were changed into powerful witnesses for Christ.

We all are a little awed by the very successful and the very rich, yes? How much of that attitude (feeling) do you see in yourself? How can you learn to remember the value of all people, no matter how powerful, famous, and rich they are?



Jesus changed water into unfermented wine.

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 4**A FAULTY FISHERMAN’S
CALLING (Luke 5:1–11)**

In the New Testament, Peter is known as one of the most famous of all the disciples. In fact, he ended up being one of the most famous people in all of human history. Talk about changing common people into unusual ones!

Read the following verses. How do they help us to understand how

Peter had been changed so much, even though he had great weaknesses?

Luke 5:1–11. What does Peter say here that shows that He is open to his need of Jesus? Why should we have this important need in our own lives?

Matthew 16:13–17. What do these verses tell us about Peter being open to the Holy Spirit?

Matthew 26:75. What do we see here also that helps us better to understand Peter and how God was able to use him?

Jesus spent a great deal of time with Peter. And Peter had many powerful experiences with Him. It is true that Peter was a common fisherman with plenty of faults. But while he was with Jesus, Peter was greatly changed—even after making some terrible mistakes. After all, he denied Jesus three times, just as Jesus told him he would.

Many lessons come from the story of Peter. But the moment Peter first understood who Jesus was, he realized his own faults and admitted them. So, with patience, Jesus was able to turn Peter’s faulty character³ into the character of someone who helped to change history.

Why must we be so careful about

judging those who we thought might not be saved? Why is that so easy to do?

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 5

HEAVENLY TEST (Luke 12:6, 7)

An evangelist⁴ once boasted that many upper-class people attended his seminars. One would hope that he would celebrate the attendance of more common people, too! Christ did not judge people by the class they were in. No one was common. Everyone was special. It is not surprising, then, that Jesus reached people with common examples and straightforward speech. Nothing escaped His attention. So, modern disciplers must carefully guard against favoring some people more than others while doing outreach work.

Read Luke 12:6, 7; Luke 13:1–5; and Matthew 6:25–30. What do these verses teach us about the worth of every person? Of course, it is easy for us to say that we believe this. But how might we be guilty of favoring some over others? This is something that the Cross has removed forever!

The cheapest birds in the marketplace were sparrows. Pairs could be purchased for an *assarion*. An *assarion* was the smallest, least valuable copper coin. But even cheap sparrows were not forgotten in heaven.

3. character—the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves.

4. evangelist—a preacher who travels from place to place, preaching the gospel to many people.

How much more is this the case with humans? Christ died for us, not for birds. In ways that we cannot begin to understand, the Cross proves the “infinite [limitless] worth” (to borrow a phrase that Ellen G. White uses a lot) of every human.

Ellen G. White wrote that “Christ would have died for one soul in order that one might live through eternity.”—Adapted from *Testimonies*⁵ for the Church, volume 8, page 73. *One soul!* Think deeply about this unbelievable idea. How should this influence the ways in which we judge others and ourselves, too?



Even sparrows were not forgotten in heaven.

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 6

A CLASSLESS SOCIETY (Acts 2:43–47)

Perhaps the most wonderful thing about early Christianity was that there were no social classes. Dividing walls had fallen under the gospel’s weight. The common person became special

through Christ. Carpenters, tax collectors, stonecutters, queens, house servants, priests, Greeks, Romans, men, women, the rich, and the poor all became equals within Christ’s kingdom of grace. The Christian community was to be a “classless society.”

What do Galatians 3:28, 29; James 2:1–9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 Peter 2:9; and 1 John 3:16–19 teach about the common bond that humans share? Think about the cultural background of the time, and of the Bible writers themselves. Why might it not have been so easy for these writers to understand this important idea?

Read Acts 2:43–47 and Acts 4:32–37. In what ways did early Christians use the principle (important rule) that one should accept all people as being equal? How did the idea that God loves common, everyday people help early Christianity to grow quickly? At the same time, we need to ask ourselves, How well do we as persons or groups use these principles in the ways that we minister to (work in helping) the world? What kinds of things hold us back from doing better in this important area?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 7

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Lifework,” pages 269, 270, in *Education*; and “Laboring for

5. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

the Middle Class,” pages 564–566, in *Evangelism*.⁶

“In this closing work of the gospel, there is a large field for the workers of Christ to work in. More than ever before, the work is to find helpers from the common people. Both the youth and those older people will be called from the field, from the vineyard, and from the workshop. And they will be sent forth by the Master to give His message. Many of these people have had little opportunity to be trained. But Christ knows that they are able workers for His purpose. If they put their hearts into the work, and continue to be learners, He will make them fit to work for Him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, pages 269, 270.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Why was Jesus so good at making disciples among the common people? Why was His message not as quickly accepted by the wealthy and the people of the higher class? How might Jesus’ humble upbringing help with His

wonderful ability in reaching the hearts and minds of common people? How well would Jesus have reached the average person if He had come as a royal prince or a rich landowner?

❷ Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–29 in class together. What are the key (important) points? Read carefully where Paul writes that God chose “the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (NIRV). What does that mean? As Christians, how are we to understand this wonderful idea? In what ways do these verses show just how twisted the ways of the world are? How can we make sure that we ourselves do not get caught up in these sinful ways?

❸ What can our Bible study groups do to become easier for “common people” to be part of? How might that influence our choice of Bible translations? Why should disciple-makers pay more attention to helpful subjects rather than theories when they try to reach out to people who are hurting and in need of help?

6. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.