



Disciple-Ship

Week 6

Disciple Focus: James the Greater, James the Less, Jude (AKA Thaddeus, AKA Judas not Iscariot)

Tonight's Text: Matthew 10:1-4

“And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”

What's in a name?

When we see James the Greater and James the Lesser in Scripture, it is in no way elevating one over the other in importance or prominence. The “greater” and “lesser” titles are most likely descriptive and are accurate in distinguishing the two by size or age. They were not related in any way. Jude was related to James the Less, he was his brother. James the Greater is listed 21 times in scripture, James the Less is mentioned 10 times, Jude

is listed just 5 times in the New Testament. These three disciples have the least amount of biblical biography. Jude is also referred to in Scripture as Thaddeus, and as Judas not Iscariot.

Fun Fact: there is a third James referred to in the NT, James the Just, who is widely accepted by bible scholars to have been the brother (Half-brother as they shared a mother but not a father) of Jesus. This James did not believe in Jesus as Messiah while He lived, but did accept Christ after the crucifixion. Some bible scholars list Jude as a brother to James the Just, but this is not fully walked out by scripture, and by the culture of the day. In biblical culture, sometimes cousins or good friends are referred to as “brother”. It is possible that Jude shared the same father as James the Just, but this would have given no blood connection between Jude and Jesus. There is a brother of Jesus listed in scripture as Jude (Matthew 13:55), but it is most likely not the disciple Jude (Thaddeus).

Q. Did any of these three write any books of the New Testament?

A. James the Elder did not write any books of the NT. **Jude** wrote the Book of Jude, the last book before the Revelations. Jude’s book is the third shortest in the NT, comprised of only 1 chapter and 25 verses. Only II John (1 chapter, 13 verses) and III John (1 chapter, 14 verses) have less. **James the Lesser** most likely wrote the Book of James.

Q. What was the focus of their writings?

A. James wrote at length about personal behavior as a disciple of Christ. James is a book of practical wisdom for believers to understand the difference between the behavior of the world and how the believer conducts themselves. It is a great book on practical discipleship. Jude writings instruct believers to keep their faith pure and guard against falling into false teaching.

Q. *What did James the Greater accomplish as a disciple?*

A. James the Greater was the brother of John the Beloved. Scripture always lists him present when mentioning his brother John, indicating a strong relationship between the two. He was prominent in position to Christ and is always listed as the third disciple along with Peter and John the Beloved who accompanied Christ during several powerful encounters. Probably most noteworthy was not his life, but his death. He was the first disciple to be executed for preaching the Gospel. He was beheaded at the order of Herod approximately 10 years after the Ascension of Christ.

Q. What can we learn from the disciples who were not prominent in Scripture?

A. One of the greatest truths we can learn is the most powerful trait of a true disciple of Jesus Christ: **Obedience**, even when no one is looking.

Matthew 28:20-²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

Obedience is not optional for the Christian. As Jesus gained more and more disciples (1 Corinthians 15:6 refers to Jesus teaching at least 500 at one time) and His popularity increased, He warned followers that obedience would be the true test of their discipleship. According to John 8:31-32, “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Q. *What does this tell us about struggling with sin?* Bury yourself in the Word and in living out the Word. The more you resist the enemy and run to God, the greater the power of God in your life.

Passages like John 8 can make us uncomfortable because they seem to imply that our status as disciples is earned. But read carefully, Jesus did

not say you become a disciple by holding to his teaching, he said you if you obey my commands you prove you are a disciple. Obedience is the consequence, not the cause. You become a disciple simply by trusting Jesus as your Savior. James, in his book, makes this statement, “Faith without works is dead.” Now we know that salvation is by faith alone in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, but we also know that any person who allows Christ into their heart will begin the process of changing to become more like Him. Remember, Jesus didn’t just talk, he acted out His faith and power.

Hard Truth: If you are not changing, you are not a disciple.

As believers we have the promise that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us, but as humans we have to face the truth that neither will our sinful nature; at least not until the Rapture or our death when our sinful nature will be buried with our earthly remains, never to be dealt with again!

Two kinds of Obedience

The Bible speaks of two kinds of obedience. They are very different from one another.

The first could be called “legalistic obedience”. This obedience is rooted in human effort and achievement. We are good so that God will call us good. Hey God, we good? I did everything you told me to. This was the kind of obedience practiced by the Pharisees in Jesus day. The motivation for this obedience was to obtain the term “righteous” over oneself. An example of this type of “self-righteousness” would be the Pharisees condemning Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. This revealed that their righteousness was from the mind, not from the heart.

The second is called “obedience rooted in grace”. This obedience is rooted in our love for God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and our desire to please the Lord and to follow His commands in order to become more “Christ like”. The motivation for this obedience is to please the Lord and grow closer to Him.

In real terms: Let's hypothetically say that God has a prohibition about playing basketball on Tuesdays. You love basketball but you choose to never play basketball on Tuesdays, so that you can call yourself righteous. You gripe and complain about God's command even though you refrain from playing on Tuesdays. When asked why you are righteous, you respond "because God says that I should never play basketball on Tuesdays, and I don't". If you see others playing basketball on Tuesdays, you are quick to condemn and judge them publically and happily compare their sorry basketball playing selves to your "righteousness". The objective of legalistic obedience may seem like a good one- the observance of God's commands- but it is flawed because it overestimates the human capacity to comply. It produces an obedience that is rooted in self, rather than in God. Jesus, with passion, rebuked this type of "obedience" in **Matthew 23:25-28...**

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (NKJV)

Obedience rooted in grace changes the picture. God says "no basketball on Tuesday's". You thank Him for His command because you know that He has your best interest in mind, refrain from playing on Tuesdays, and encourage others not to play on Tuesday's so that they may grow closer to the Lord." When you witness others playing basketball on Tuesdays, you pray for them and ask the Lord for boldness in bringing gentle and private correction, born out of a desire to see them grow closer in their walk with the Lord. You recognize that if not for the grace and strength the Lord has given you to help you refrain from playing, you would be right out there on the court with them. Grace, like legalism, also has obedience to

God's commands as its objective. According to **Romans 2:14**, it is not those who hear God's Law who are declared righteous but those who obey it. But the difference with obedience rooted in grace is that it is grounded in Christ's righteousness rather than in my own. It is "obedience that comes from faith" (**Romans 1:5**). For the Christian, faith is obedience because it focuses on the one who obeyed **ALL** of God's commandments on my behalf. When I trust in Jesus Christ, my faith is credited to me as righteousness (**Romans 4:5**). Obedience rooted in grace recognizes that righteousness can only be received as a gift. It cannot be earned as a wage or reward. My obedience is an expression of gratitude for that gift.

Love is the motivation for the Christian to walk in obedience.

John 14:15,24 - "If you love me" He told His disciples, "you will obey what I command"... "He who does not love me," He warned, "will not obey my teaching."

Apostles Challenge

What are some areas of behavior and attitude that you need to change? Put these areas under the Lord through prayer and begin to be obedient to the Word of God. The more you resist through the power of the Holy Spirit, the stronger spiritually that you will become.