

Friday

The Joy of Being a Disciple

It was Peter, the brash, self-confident disciple, who asked perhaps one of the best questions in all of Scripture. In the verses preceding Peter's query, Jesus responded to a wealthy young man who asked, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16).

After Jesus recited a list of commandments for the young ruler to consider, He identified a deeper spiritual weakness: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (verse 21). Verse 22 then captures what has to be one of the saddest epitaphs ever written for a stillborn disciple: "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Ellen White's haunting commentary on this fateful decision is worth a careful read:

"If he had realized the value of the offered gift, quickly would he have enrolled himself as one of Christ's followers. He was a member of the honored council of the Jews, and Satan was tempting him with flattering prospects of the future. He wanted the heavenly treasure, but he wanted also the temporal advantages his riches would bring him. He was sorry that such conditions existed; he desired eternal life, but he was not willing to make the sacrifice. The cost of eternal life seemed too great."¹

As the sorrowful young ruler backed away, Jesus turned to the disciples and said something that still shocks us two-plus millennia later: "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And

again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (verses 23, 24). "Who then can be saved?" the disciples gasped (verse 25). It was then that a red-faced Peter asked what no other disciple dared ask: "See, we have left all and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?" (verse 27).

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

Can we blame Peter for asking this question? Jesus often spoke of the cost of discipleship, as He did in Matthew 16:24 when He stated, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." We know discipleship costs, but does it pay? The answer is YES! Here are five precious joys awaiting those willing to dive into discipleship with Jesus—"the process of becoming like Jesus by spending time with Jesus."²

THE JOY OF A PURPOSEFUL LIFE

In Matthew 16:25 Jesus makes a bold prediction concerning all disciples who choose to follow Him: "For whoever desires to save his life



“We know discipleship costs, but does it pay?”

will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” Is there a greater sorrow in life than never finding the purpose for which you were created? Here Jesus promises that all who give their lives in service to Him will find the life they were meant to live, one part of which is to become “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). A purpose-filled life is a life of joy!

THE JOY OF UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

One of the things I love most about my parents is their willingness to accept and love me, even when I disappoint them. As great as they are, their acceptance of me cannot compare to that of Jesus. Jesus declared, “All that the Father

gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37). Have you felt the come-as-you-are joy of Jesus’ unconditional acceptance? Discipleship with Jesus will change you, but not before He unconditionally accepts you.

THE JOY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST AND GOD

When we walk in relationship with Jesus, we enter into friendship with the God of the universe, and this friendship comes with benefits: “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). All the wisdom and power of the universe is at the disposal of every disciple who enters into friendship with Jesus! This is a joy that brings peace to many a careworn disciple!

THE JOY OF HEALING REST AND RESTORATION

In a world of pandemics and peril, this joy alone is worth the price of walking with Jesus. Right now He bids us, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Jesus offers us the yoke of His will for the backbreaking yoke of sin. He promises, “You will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (verses 28, 29).

Of this beautiful promise Ellen White wrote, “The Lord never makes a false estimate concerning His heritage. He measures the men with whom He is working. When they submit to His yoke, when they give up the struggle that has been unprofitable for themselves and for the cause of God, they will find peace and rest. When they become

sensible of their own weakness, their own deficiencies, they will delight to do God’s will.”³

THE JOY OF ETERNAL LIFE AND SO MUCH MORE

Jesus did answer Peter’s question, and His answer represents perhaps the greatest joy of all. Let me assure you, said Jesus, “in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19:28, 29). One day soon all true disciples will reign forever with He who has transformed us into His very image. That will be joy unspeakable and full of glory! (1 Peter 1:8). ©

¹ Ellen G. White. *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn, 1898, 1940), p. 520.

² *Discipleship Handbook: A Resource for Seventh-day Adventist Members* (Silver Spring, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2018), p. 3.

³ Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Oct. 23, 1900.

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Questions for Reflection

1. In what way can you identify with the rich young ruler?
2. Have you ever made a sacrifice for Jesus and experienced blessing as a result?
3. Have you ever considered self-denial a joyful experience?