



Discipleship

Ideas for the Iowa District West

Introduction

The following “Discipleship Ideas” from the readings are not intended for any other purpose than to provide ideas of application from each reading that may be included in the taught and preached Word for this particular Sunday to help teach a life of discipleship. L.C.M.S. pastors are gifted at preaching Law and Gospel, but often lack in the matter of personal applications to the Word. This tool is for no other reason than to offer some seeds of thought to do that.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - SERIES A

September 13, 2015

From C.P.H. About the Cover: Who among us doesn’t understand the father’s cry: “I believe; help my unbelief!”? One of our Lutheran Confessions describes true divine service in this way: “the exercises of faith struggling with despair” (Treatise 44, *Concordia*, © 2006 CPH). To hold to the Lord and His gracious promises against everything that seems to contradict and oppose them—this is the challenge of faith, and it is our loving Lord who causes faith to grow strong.

First Reading Isaiah 50:4–10

⁴The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. ¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

1st Reading Discipleship Notes: Isaiah identifies himself as one who is taught but acknowledges the fact that it is the Lord who has given him the openness to learn, the help to endure and the strength to stand up against his enemies. But this reading is not merely for or about Isaiah. We too, are blessed to receive wisdom and help from God. Having such gifts allows us to acknowledge God as giver of all things. Like Isaiah, we can by God's grace, utilize wisdom, strength, vision and even resources for the purposes of God. What a marvelous reading from which to apply our walk as modern day disciples of Jesus Christ!

Epistle Reading James 3:1–12

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Epistle Discipleship Notes: James' primary concern in this reading has to do with the use of the tongue. It is hard to tame and difficult to control. "With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God." The tongue is a world of unrighteousness and yet, by the grace of God it can certainly be curtailed to some extent. What pastor has not seen that happen when coming into a group of people who do not know him as a pastor hears the harsh and vulgar reality of vocabulary yet after being introduced as a pastor notices a quick change in language use. By the grace of God, the unbridled tongue can be somewhat controlled and this is a perfect reading to address that issue. Even the use of the tongue is a part of our stewardship concern of a "free and joyous activity of the child of God, and God's family the Church, in managing all of life . . ." (a portion of the LCMS definition of Christian Stewardship).

Gospel Reading:**Mark 9:14–29**

¹⁴ When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them.

¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to [Jesus] and greeted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?"

¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." ¹⁹ And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." ²⁰ And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

²³ And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes."

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

²⁶ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Gospel Discipleship Notes: In this Gospel reading we see the marvel of God in His power to overcome evil through the exorcism of an evil spirit from a boy. The boy's father shared perhaps one of the most profound statements in saying, "I believe; help my unbelief!" As modern disciples of the Savior, this ought to be our prayer and relying on the grace of God we can seek help for our unbelief and struggles with His Word. We can further rely on Christ's compassion for us and realize that "all things are possible for one who believes." Receiving God's grace to rely on these truths, we can further respond to that grace with joy filled service and thanksgiving.

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline

Read Isaiah 50:4–10

⁴The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. ¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

1. Why does Isaiah point to the issue of being taught in the matter of speaking and hearing?
2. How does God's power of opening one's ear lead to a lack of rebellion and enduring disgrace and persecution?
3. How does the Lord help someone from being put to shame and being declared guilty?
4. What does it mean that those who are rebellious and who do persecute will wear out like a garment and be eaten up by the moth?
5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read James 3:1–12

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a

spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

6. How is a teacher judged with greater strictness?
7. How is the tongue a fire and a world of unrighteousness?
8. The tongue is expressed here as perhaps the greatest sinful part of the body. Do we generally think of it as such? Why or why not.
9. Why is the tongue so hard to tame?
10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Mark 9:14–29

¹⁴ When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them.

¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to [Jesus] and greeted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?"

¹⁷ And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. ¹⁸ And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." ¹⁹ And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me."

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²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

²⁶ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

11. On the basis of this reading, do we ever find out exactly what the disciples and the scribes were arguing about?

12. What seemed to be the central issue of their discussion?
13. Why were the disciples so upset about the fact that they were unable to cast this demon out of the boy?
14. What was meant by the man's response to Jesus in saying, "I believe; help my unbelief!"?
15. What is perhaps the most amazing aspect of this miracle?
16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Adult/High School Youth Discipleship Bible Study Outline (Leader's Guide)

Read Isaiah 50:4–10

⁴The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. ¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

1. Why does Isaiah point to the issue of being taught in the matter of speaking and hearing?

The readings for today all take note of the matter of speaking and hearing. An unlearned individual makes little positive contribution to the spiritual benefit of others. But God who works through our hearing and speaking blesses both the words of the mouth and the hearing of the learner. One who speaks beneficially for the sake of others is one who is taught, but he/she is also a listener and learner of God's Word. Being taught is truly an important matter.

2. How does God's power of opening one's ear lead to a lack of rebellion and enduring disgrace and persecution?

Once again, an open ear is a matter of learning and being taught. The grace of God working through the wisdom of His Word leads to an opened ear and the wisdom that comes from the Word. That in turn results in God's grace at work in our lives leading to a lack of rebellion on our part, enduring disgrace from the world and persecution which accompanies.

3. How does the Lord help someone from being put to shame and being declared guilty?

Solely by His grace which is a matter often unseen by the world but certainly evident in the life of the believer.

4. What does it mean that those who are rebellious and who do persecute will wear out like a garment and be eaten up by the moth?

This is an illustration of the judgement that falls on unbelief and rebellion against God and the people of God.

5. What application from this reading might you make for your life?

Read: James 3:1–12

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

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6. How is a teacher judged with greater strictness?

A teacher has tremendous influence on the learner and to misrepresent God and His Word especially is a serious issue. Luther's explanation of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer and the second commandment certainly clarifies the seriousness of this matter.

7. How is the tongue a fire and a world of unrighteousness?

Fire spreads rapidly and in a fallen world, so also does the word of mouth which often times violates the eighth commandment and destroys people's good reputation as a result. In that way the tongue is like a fire in a fallen world of unrighteousness. It is also like a fire in the sin against the second commandment and quickly spreads to others making them feel free to use God's name in vain and all kinds of vulgarities in the world of unrighteousness.

8. The tongue is expressed here as perhaps the greatest sinful part of the body. Do we generally think of it as such? Why or why not.

Answers will vary.

9. Why is the tongue so hard to tame?

There seems to be no natural filter between the thought process and the spoken word. This is one part of the body that remains uncovered but not generally considered a source of evil and yet Satan uses the spoken word as his vehicle to destroy and influence others with evil.

10. How might this reading encourage us to live more serious lives of discipleship with regard to our faith?

READ: Mark 9:14–29

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¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to [Jesus] and greeted him.

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11. On the basis of this reading, do we ever find out exactly what the disciples and the scribes were arguing about?

Not exactly.

12. What seemed to be the central issue of their discussion?

The fact that the disciples had tried to exorcise the demon but were unable to do so.

13. Why were the disciples so upset about the fact that they were unable to cast this demon out of the boy?

Because they had cast out demons before. See Mark 6:6-12.

14. What was meant by the man's response to Jesus in saying, "I believe; help my unbelief!"?

This was a prayerful petition of the man to help him overcome his doubts. This is a most appropriate prayer of all followers of Jesus because we all have our moments of doubt and despair.

15. What is perhaps the most amazing aspect of this miracle?

The fact that this boy had had this malady since childhood and therefore had not been able hear or speak plainly and yet upon the completion of this miracle he was able to speak plainly without therapy or teaching verbal skills.

16. What application of this Gospel reading will you apply to your life as a result of hearing it today?

Discipleship Bulletin Blub

How well do you hear and speak? Most people might answer that they are able to do both very well. But the matter of truth is that spiritual speaking and learning is a difficult thing to do well and in fact, those responsible for teaching God's Word serve in a most critical manner. Each of the lessons for today address the matter of speaking and hearing and as modern day disciples, we ought to find ourselves consistently engaged in prayer for the Spirit's gift of allowing us to hear and learn and speak God's truth to the world around us appropriately.

Discipleship Prayer Thought

Almighty and Everlasting God, grant Your grace that we might have open ears to hear Your Word and to grow in wisdom and knowledge of that Word. Help us to be learned people of Your trust that we might share Your wisdom with others and that they, too, might grow in spiritual wisdom and knowledge to the glory of Your holy name. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**