

Taking Strides

Disciples

A Witness

The phone rang and I greeted a young pastor friend from Arlington, Virginia. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Studying," I replied. "Nothing special."

"Are you sitting down?" "Yes, why?" "Your father just trusted Christ this evening." "He what? You've got to be kidding!" I blurted out.

Such an inappropriate response grew out of long detours in our father-son journey. Ever since I received Christ as a boy my concern has been for the salvation of my family and loved ones. On repeated occasions I had broached the subject of the gospel with dad, but his response was less than excited.

My father has always been a very important person to me. Not that I approved of everything he said or did or that I imitated him consciously in any way. We weren't really close friends, either. But he was important in my life because of the indirect impact he made upon me.

Dad was a military man. He had seen action around the world. During the periods when he was embroiled in battle, I would become very sensitive to his spiritual need. I and my family prayed for him, but at times I'm afraid my faith sputtered. His response was always the same: Son, don't worry about me. I'll work it out with God (as if God could be manipulated like a Pentagon official).

God brought a man into my life, a man with a passion for men. His name was Butch Hardman. One day before we knew each other Butch was boarding a plane in Detroit when a friend handed him a cassette tape.

"Ever hear Hendricks? Here's a tape you should listen to." On that tape I related my father's spiritual need.

Butch listened and something about the anecdote reminded him of his own father with whom he had shared Christ shortly before he died. He began to pray for this unknown man, George Hendricks. Some months later Butch attended a pastors' conference in Philadelphia where I was the speaker. He shook my hand afterward. That was the only time our paths crossed before a remarkable incident in Arlington.

Butch was driving the church bus down the street, having discharged all his passengers. He saw a man standing on the corner who reminded him uncannily of Howard Hendricks. Could it possibly be...? He backed up the bus, stopped, got off, and went over to the man.

"Are you by any chance Howard Hendricks' father?"

It is easy to imagine the startled response. "Er-ah (I can envision my father's critical once-over with his steely blue eyes) yeah -- you a student of my son?"

"No, I'm not, but he sure has helped me. Got time for a cup of coffee?"

That encounter began a friendship, skillfully engineered by the Spirit of God. Butch undoubtedly sensed dad's hesitancy when he discovered he had met a preacher. For a long time Butch did not invite him to attend his church. He simply suggested that dad drop by the office for coffee. Patiently he endured dad's cigars and his endless repertoire of war stories. Before long he also learned that dad had been diagnosed as having a terminal throat cancer.

Months later Butch was at his bedside. "Mr. Hendricks, I'll be leaving shortly for a Holy Land trip. Instead of

my listening to you tonight, would you let me tell you a story?"

Butch had earned his hearing and he began simply to relate the interview of Jesus Christ with Nicodemus as recorded by the Apostle John. At the conclusion dad accepted Butch's invitation to receive Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior. Then dad got up out of bed, stood, and saluted with a smile. "No I'm under a new Commander-in-Chief!" That night Butch called Dallas.

The last time I saw dad alive I could not believe he was the same man I had known. His frame was wasted, but his spirit was more virile than I had ever known.

In accordance with dad's specific provision in his will, Butch Hardman conducted the crisp military funeral in Arlington cemetery where the gospel of Jesus Christ was presented to the small group of family and military attendants. As the guns saluted their final farewell, I knew God had vindicated forty-two years of prayer. [Howard and Jeanne Hendricks, *Footprints*, Multnomah Press, 1981, Page 16-19.]

In life and word, never give up. Never!

Howard & Jeanne
HENDRICKS

FOOTPRINTS



Walking Through the
Passages of Life...

For Discussion

**After all those years, why do you think Howard Hendricks' father finally accepted Christ?
What made the difference?**

Encounter

Read God's word so He can speak to you.

Matthew 5:13-16; 28:18-20

5:13 *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Examine

what the passage says before you decide what it means.

Read it carefully **three** times.

Underline anything you see as important. Write any questions you have.

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Explore

God's Word by asking questions of what you saw.
The notes that follow may help you think through these questions.

1)

Why do you think Jesus used "salt" and "light" to describe His followers?

* What do salt and light represent?

2)

Jesus talked about salt losing its saltiness and light being hidden. How might that look in a believer's life? Why do you think this would happen?

* What would be the consequences of losing saltiness or light?

3)

What is involved in "making disciples"?

* Is this something that every believer can do? Should do? How?

4)

If you were to share the gospel with someone, what would you need to make it happen? What circumstances? What skills? What attitudes?

Explore (con't)

5)

New believers need spiritual “neo-natal care.” What is involved with this? What is the goal? What would you need in order to help provide this for a new believer?

6)

Being a witness for Christ and the gospel is not just about words but about life. How can you show the truth of Jesus to people in your life? How will they know it's about Jesus?

* What would you need in order to show the love and life of Christ through care for people?

Notes On The Passage

(Adapted from Thomas Constable, *Expository Notes*)

Matthew 5:13-16

13 – By placing “you” (Gr. *hymeis*) in the emphatic position in the Greek text, Jesus was stressing the unique calling of His disciples (cf. v. 14). “Salt” was important in the ancient Near East because it flavored food, retarded decay in food, and in small doses fertilized land. Jesus implied by this metaphor that His disciples could positively affect the world (Gr. *kosmos*, the inhabited earth, i.e., humankind). They had the opportunity through their lives and witness to bring blessing to others and to retard the natural decay that sin produces in life. As salt thrown out on the earth, they could also produce fruit to God. The most obvious characteristic of salt is that it is different from the medium into which its user places it. Jesus' disciples likewise are to be different from the world. As salt is an antiseptic, so the disciples are to be a moral disinfectant in a sin-infested world.

14-16

- “Light” is a common symbol in the Bible. It represents purity, truth, knowledge, divine revelation, and God's presence—all in contrast to their opposites. The Israelites thought of themselves as lights in a dark world (Isa. 42:6; Rom. 2:19). However, the Old Testament spoke of Messiah as the true light of the world (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; cf. Matt. 4:16; John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35; 1 John 1:7). Jesus' disciples are lights in the derived sense, as the moon is a light but only because it reflects the light of the sun (cf. Eph. 5:8-9; Phil. 2:15).

The “city set on a hill” (v. 14) may refer to messianic prophecy concerning God lifting up Zion and causing the nations to stream to it (Isa. 2:2-5; et al.). Since God will make the capital of the messianic kingdom prominent, it is inappropriate for the citizens of that city to assume a low profile in the world before its inauguration (cf. Luke 11:33).

The disciples must therefore manifest “good works,” the outward demonstration or testimony to the righteousness

Notes On The Passage (con't)

that is within them (v. 16). Even though the light may provoke persecution (vv. 10-12), they must reflect the light of God. For the first time in Matthew, Jesus referred to God as the "Father" of His disciples (cf. vv. 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8-9, 14-15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11, 21). The introduction of "good works" (v. 16) leads on to further exposition of that theme in 5:17—7:12.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 - Notice the repetition of "all" in verses 18-20: all authority, all nations, all things, and all the days. Matthew stressed the authority of Jesus throughout his Gospel (7:29; 10:1, 7-8; 11:27; 22:43-44; 24:35). God restricted Jesus' authority before His resurrection because of His role as the Suffering Servant. Following His resurrection God broadened the sphere in which Jesus exercised authority (cf. 4:8-10). He became the One through whom God now mediates all authority (cf. Dan. 7:14; Phil. 2:5-11). This was Jesus' great claim.

19-20 - He gave them a new universal mission in keeping with His new universal authority. Previously He had limited their work to Israel (10:1-8; cf. 15:24). Now He sent them into all the world. They could go confidently knowing that Jesus has sovereign control over everything in heaven and on earth (cf. Rom. 8:28).

In the Greek text there is one imperative verb, "make disciples" (Gr. *matheteusate*), modified by three participles, "going," "baptizing," and "teaching." All three participles describe what is required to make disciples, and all are understood as a command. Making disciples involves bringing people into relationship with Jesus as pupils to

teacher. It involves getting them to take His yoke of instruction upon themselves as authoritative (11:29), accepting His words as true, and submitting to His will as what is right. A good disciple is one who listens, understands, and obeys Jesus' instructions (12:46-50). Disciples of Jesus must duplicate themselves in others. Jesus' disciples should make disciples among all people without distinction.

Baptism implies evangelism that preceded it. When the preached gospel is believed, then baptism publically demonstrates that identification with Christ by faith. Discipling also involves teaching followers everything Jesus commanded His disciples. As Matthew has already shown, that includes Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament as God originally intended (e.g., Matt 5). Disciples must not just understand what Jesus has commanded, as foundational as that is. They must also obey it.

This Gospel ends not with a command but with a promise, or rather a fact. Jesus will be with His disciples as they carry out His will. This is His great commitment. Immanuel is still God with us (1:23; cf. 18:20). The expression "to the end of the age" (Gr. *pasas tes hemeras*) literally means "the whole of every day." Jesus promised to be with us every day forever. And until He returns to begin the Kingdom on earth, we (Kingdom citizens) have a mission to keep in this foreign land: make disciples.

Going Further

One thing we can do to train ourselves to remember, is to memorize a part of what our Father has said to us. The Holy Spirit can use this to change our thinking so that our "heads" are more like Jesus.

This week, memorize Matthew 5:16 .

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