

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, June 26-July 2 (A) – Matthew 10:40-42

Tips of Discipleship: *Welcome Others*

Focus Question: *How have you welcomed someone this week as if that person were Christ?*

word of life

“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Matthew 10:40 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 10:40-42

The tenth chapter of Matthew focuses on the mission of the twelve being sent into a hostile world. Jesus warns his disciples to be ready for persecution and rejection. This chapter concludes with gentler words concerning the opposite response by people – being welcomed. Not everyone rejects followers of Jesus. This news is refreshing consolation to any who are sent in the name of Jesus.

1. *What are ways to welcome a stranger?*
2. *How does it feel to be welcomed – especially when away from home?*

When someone welcomes one of the disciples it is like welcoming Jesus Christ. And there is more. To welcome Jesus is to welcome God who sent Jesus. Basic hospitality is not to be underestimated. Jesus clearly links his disciples with himself and God.

3. *How can this be?*
4. *Knowing a disciple is connected to God, why would anyone reject the disciple?*
5. *How is a disciple of Jesus recognized?*

This concept is not new. The Old Testament prophets were sent in the name of the Lord. Some were rejected, but they were also welcomed at times. If and when prophets are welcomed, the person who extends hospitality is promised a reward. Likewise, anyone who welcomes a righteous person also receives a reward.

6. *What reward might be given to the person who extends hospitality to a prophet or righteous person?*
7. *What might be the difference between a prophet and a righteous person?*

Jesus is not finished. “And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.” (Matthew 10:42 NRSV) Cold water means a great deal in a desert where water is not easily available. The real question is the identity of “these little ones.” Scholars sometimes describe “these little ones” as the ordinary members of the body of Christ – those who live their lives faithfully, full of humility, and without acclaim.

8. *How do you define “these little ones”?*
9. *Who are “these little ones” living today?*
10. *Why is there such an emphasis on hospitality?*

Jesus connects himself to his followers as they bear witness to him. Thus, anyone who receives and welcomes one of his ambassadors will be recognized and rewarded.

11. *How do we prepare to welcome others in the name of Jesus Christ?*
12. *How do we respond when others welcome us?*

word among us

Many congregations gathered together in the heat of summer to hear a guest pastor preach. Through the humor of his stories, they heard about him growing up in Africa and coming to the South for his high school years. At one point, he asked them to shout “Amen” if they agreed with him. How could you not agree with him as spoke eloquently about Jesus Christ? He was their guest. Why not shout an “Amen”? They realized it was enjoyable to get involved in the sermon in such a way.

Midway through the sermon, the preacher instructed them to say “ouch” if he was close to a sore point in their life. The people complied as he offered prophetic words on the hurts of their day. He preached the gospel – challenging and comforting them with his words. They in turn welcomed him in their midst, grateful for his time with them.

1. *What does it mean to welcome a representative of Christ?*
2. *Do you have to agree with an ambassador of Christ to welcome him or her? How so?*
3. *If you knew Jesus was coming tonight to a meeting at your congregation, what would you do?*
4. *If you were at a meeting at your congregation and a stranger walked in, what would you do?*
5. *Describe a time when you were warmly welcomed.*

Hospitality seems to come naturally for some people. They seem to have a knack for sensing the needs of others – ready to get a glass of water, give directions, or listen.

6. *How do we learn how to welcome people?*
7. *What advice would you give to someone who wanted to increase their welcoming skills?*

Take a few minutes to assess your own congregation’s hospitality. Imagine you are a visitor trying to find your church and attend worship. List the ways a person finds out about your worship schedule and location. Describe how that person would be received before, during, and after worship.

8. *How would you rate the hospitality of your congregation?*
9. *How might it be improved?*

Take a few minutes to assess your own personal hospitality skills. Think through a typical day. Consider opportunities to welcome people in your life. Imagine Jesus crossing your path this week. Describe the reception he might receive from you – especially if you do not first recognize him.

10. *What can we learn from this?*
11. *How might you become more welcoming?*

Prayer

Gracious God, show me ways to welcome your ambassadors into my life. Help me to be open to the needs of the stranger. Amen

Dig Deeper

Jeremiah 28:5-9

last word

Take time this week
to welcome a stranger in the name of Christ.



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