**#DISCIPLE**

***“Dear Theophilius, In the first book I wrote about everything Jesus set out to do and teach, until the day when, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen, He was taken up to heaven.”****Acts* 1:1-14 NASB

**What Does it Say?**

1: Luke wrote everything Jesus set out to do and teach

2: Until the day, giving instructions, through Holy Spirit to apostles

**What Does it Mean?** *Acts of the Apostles* begins with Luke explaining this book as the continuing story from, *Luke*, his Gospel account of Jesus’ life. Luke’s Gospel is the story of the physical Jesus, fulfilling all the Messianic promises. *Acts* is not a new thing, but a promised thing. Jesus promised the disciples that the Counselor, a Helper, named the Holy Spirit would come (John 14:12). Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, accomplished “not His will, but Thy will be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus promised this same Helper to His disciples, His talmidin.

 I find it interesting that Jesus’ apostles, chosen through the direction of the Holy Spirit, were the disciples who followed Him while He walked upon the earth. That may not seem very profound to you but the more I thought about it the bigger it seemed to me. The word “apostles”, “apostolos” in the Greek, means messengers– the sent out ones. Choosing this title makes perfect sense. They walked beside Jesus and they were witnesses of what Jesus said and did. These disciples lived completely transformed lives because of what Jesus **personally** did for each one of *them*. Just think about Peter’s transformation, which we discussed on last week’s blog!

 I think some of the meaning of these terms is lost on us today because we do not understand what a disciple, or talmid, is or was. A ***talmid*** was highly educated in the written and oral Jewish laws and culture. They possessed the ability to not only memorize but to also understand and teach a text. This was not something that everyone could do. Only exceptional young men, who had dedicated time to study, were allowed to aspire to follow a Rabbi. A young man would usually “apply” to follow a Rabbi he thought he could be like. A Rabbi would only invite a young man he felt had the potential to become EXACTLY like himself. A Rabbi would vet each candidate before he would extend an offer, “Come follow me!” A young man left home to follow in the literal footsteps of that Rabbi, which was a total commitment. The young man became a *talmid* of that Rabbi. The young man spoke, dressed, and walked like the Rabbi. When people spoke to the young talmid, they would think they were talking to his Rabbi. The talmid did not want to know what the Rabbi knew, the talmid wanted to become who the Rabbi was. That is very DIFFERENT from our current understanding of discipleship.

 After a certain amount of time, usually years, the Rabbi would release the talmid and give him a rabbinic blessing: ***“As far as it possible, you are like me now. GO! Seek others who will imitate you, because you are like me. When they imitate you, they will be like me.”***

In Acts chapter 1, Jesus gave His Rabbinic blessing to His disciples, His talmidin. Jesus’ talmin scattered and returned to their former lives, after his crucifixion. He brought them back together to send them out as messengers and apostles. Jesus could have found new people to be disciples and rejected those who had scattered. But Jesus Himself went and brought them back.

 You still may not have any idea where I am going with this. However, I want us to grasp the qualifications Jesus sought in a disciple. We may think that a disciple is someone with a message to share because they have a lot of Bible knowledge or charisma. Jesus did not choose disciples based on their aptitude for knowledge or personality but based on their heart for following Him. These “apostles” and “messengers” were sent and trusted by Jesus because they spent time being His disciples during His ministry. Each disciple walked with Jesus and knew Him intimately because they lived with Him. They walked in His steps daily. At the appointed time, Jesus sent them out. Many of us are super excited to “go and make disciples,” pass out tracts and share the Gospel. These are good things. However, if we don’t take time to personally follow Jesus, know Jesus, and allow ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit we miss the point of being a disciple. It may seem easier to for some us to “do” discipleship rather than to “be” a disciple. To be a disciple takes total commitment. A true disciple wants to be who the Rabbi is, not know what the Rabbi knows. I can get caught up in the process of acquiring knowledge instead of having a daily dependence on Jesus. Is this true in your life as well?

It has been said that a true disciple is not seen– just the Rabbi. A disciple who is following so closely behind his Rabbi that he is covered in his dust is invisible. No one would recognize the disciple because they would only see the Rabbi. When a disciple spoke, the crowd would hear his Rabbi. For true disciples, there were no platforms or stages. Every believer is called to make disciples. Yet, can we say with confidence that we want to reproduce disciples that look just like us?

This passage gives me food for thought and I hope you feel the same. Living a life where the Holy Spirit is leading and directing us to be #unrestrained demands that we become true disciples who are willing to be changed into the image of our Master, Jesus Christ.

**What Does it Mean?**

**These are questions I ask myself and invite you to do the same….**

 What evidence is there in my life that I am a true disciple of Jesus Christ?

Am I interested in being His disciple or just His messenger?

Am I content doing daily devotions or my devotion to daily follow and become more like Jesus?

***Live it out!***

***The Gospel goes out with #unrestrained power when we follow Jesus day in and day out.***

**NEXT WEEKS SCRIPTURE IS ACTS 2:1-42**

**Recommended Reading**:

*Spiritual Profiling* by Tom Hovestal available at <https://rover.ebay.com/rover/0/0/0?mpre=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ebay.com%2Fulk%2Fitm%2F362872772871>

*Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity by Nabeel Qureshi

https://www.amazon.com/Seeking-Allah-Finding-Jesus-Christianity/dp/0310092647/ref=sr\_1\_1?crid=3NM7OJZMMEM3S&keywords=seeking+allah+finding+jesus&qid=1579607888&sprefix=seeking+allah+f%2Caps%2C163&sr=8-1

**Recommended Spiritual Profiling Assessment**:

www.spiritualprofiling,com

**Recommended Study Bible:**

The Complete Jewish Study Bible[https://www.amazon.com/dp/1619708671/ref=cm\_sw\_em\_r\_mt\_dp\_U\_3G0hEb5Q25WX9](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1619708671/ref%3Dcm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_U_3G0hEb5Q25WX9)

Join me in praying and fasting this winter season as we live out the book of Acts, together.