

Disciple Making Disciples

Acts 9:10-19

Every one of us, sometime during our school years, learned the story of Isaac Newton's famous discovery. You may remember the story. Newton was sitting under an apple tree one afternoon, and a ripe apple fell from one of the limbs and hit him on the head. At that moment, Isaac Newton discovered the need for Excedrin! No, he discovered the Law of Gravity.

Few of us learned, however, that if it were not for another scientist named Edmund Halley, the world might never have learned of Newton. In fact, it was Halley who:

- challenged and mentored Newton through his original ideas;
- corrected Newton's mathematical errors;
- coaxed the hesitant Newton to put his discoveries into writing;
- edited and supervised Newton's publications;
- even financed Newton's first edition.

Historians call it one of the most selfless examples in the annals of science. Newton began almost immediately, to reap the rewards of scientific prominence and prestige, while Halley withdrew into the shadows and received little credit. One biographical statement about Halley said that he did not care who got the credit, his mission in life was to simply advance the cause of science. In fact, the only reason we even know the name of Halley is because of the comet that was named for him. Halley calculated that the comet would appear every seventy-six years and then, would disappear once again into the vast heavens.

Our study today, resembles the story of Edmund Halley. It is the story of a man who launched the prominent career of another man and then, disappeared from sight. His name was Ananias, and his brief appearance occurs in the book of Acts, chapter 9. Like the comet and its discoverer, he appeared for just a moment and then, withdrew into the shadows of history, never to be heard from again (Stephen Davey in a sermon on Acts 9:10-19).

Ananias was Saul's first friend after his Damascus road conversion. Paul had what every new believer needs: another Christian who is mature to help him/her get started. Ananias was that person. What Stephen was to Paul before his conversion, Ananias was after his conversion. Not only does the sinner need someone to lead him to Christ, but the new convert needs someone to help him grow in Christ.

Ananias disciplined Paul or at least started the discipling process. Ananias teaches us that disciples disciple.

1. To Disciple another believer, we first must be a Disciple of Christ (Acts 19:10-16)

Ananias is called a disciple in Acts 9:10. Luke's favorite description of believers in Acts is "disciple." Luke uses different names: 9:2 "of the way" 9:13 "saints" 9:14 "all that call on your name" 9:30 "brethren." More frequently, however, Luke calls believers "disciples" as in 9:1, 10, 19, 25, 26, 36, 38.

Before Jesus ascended back to Heaven He gave the church His Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. The command in the Great Commission is "Make Disciples." So what does a disciple look like?

A. A disciple loves God's Word (Acts 22:12a).

Twenty years after his encounter with Ananias, Paul will recall what Ananias did for him right after his conversion. In Paul's testimony before a Jewish mob, Paul described Ananias as "a devout man according to the law." Ananias was like the blessed man in Psalm 1 who "delights in the law of the Lord and his law does he meditate day and night." Are you delighting in God's Word day and night?

B. A disciple has a good testimony (Acts 22:12b).

When your name is mentioned, what do people think? The Ananias of 9:10 was better than the Ananias of chapter five. The Judas of 9:11 is better than the Judas who betrayed Christ. The Saul in chapter 9:11 is better than the OT Saul. When your name is mentioned, will it be associated with the Ananias of Acts 5 or Acts 9? With the Judas who was a religious hypocrite or the Judas of Acts 9? With Saul of the OT about whom we are not sure if he were a believer or the Saul of Acts 9?

C. A disciple fellowships with God (Acts 9:10-16).

We can't fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew in 28 to make disciples without first fulfilling the Great Command of Jesus in Matthew 22 to love God with all our heart. In 9:10-16, Ananias shows his love for God.

1) To fellowship a believer must be surrendered "Behold, I am here, Lord."

Ananias and the Lord were on speaking terms and Ananias was surrendered to do God's will. Abraham with his son Isaac on the altar and his knife outstretched responded when God called him with "Here am I." Have you spoke these words of surrender to God?

2) To fellowship a believer must be led as Ananias is in 9:11-12.

God led Philip to the Ethiopian in 8:26. God leads Ananias to Saul in 9:11-12. God knew this was a difficult task for Ananias. So the Lord gave Ananias a clue of Saul's conversion with the words "behold, he prays." For the first time Saul the Pharisee who prayed in public to be heard of men (Matthew 6:5) prayed in private to be heard of the Lord. Paul would later instruct us to "pray when you pray" (Ephesians 6:18).

To whom this past week did God lead you to take out for a meal or to meet with in order to disciple?

3) To fellowship a believer sometimes struggles as in 9:13-14.

Apparently Ananias did not catch clue and thinks it necessary to inform the Lord of the dangerous situation he has heard from the refugees from Jerusalem. The Lord patiently listens and then clearly relieves Ananias' fears in the news of Saul's conversion in 9:15-16.

2. Once we are Disciples of Christ then we can be Disciplers of Believers (Acts 9:17-19)

A. Disciplers Identify with people (Acts 9:17).

Believers who spend time with God are led to minister to people. How can we minister to people?

1. By welcoming them to the family of God or our church family.

Ananias, as we would say, shook Saul's hand or gave him a hug. Have you ever been to an unfriendly, cold church? I hear over and over again from visitors that our church is a friendly church.

2. By forgiving one another. Ananias called Saul "Brother" not "Persecutor."

Saul had persecuted perhaps friends and family members of Ananias. But Ananias knew Saul had been forgiven by God so he is willing to forgive. We forgive others because we have been forgiven.

3. By helping people physically and spiritually.

Ananias helped Saul receive his physical sight first and then be filled with the Holy Spirit. So often serving people's material and physical needs is the gateway to serving them spiritually.

Our Hospitality Committee performed this ministry this past week when one of our members passed away. The son said if he lived closer he would attend this church.

Our Family Care ministry also performed this ministry this week. Two different Family Care leaders contacted me about their members. They are ministering physically and spiritually.

B. Disciplers identify believers with the church (Acts 9:18).

1. Once a person is saved the NT pattern is to be baptized and join the church as first seen on the first day of the church in 2:41.

Ananias ministered to Saul not being an apostle or deacon like Philip in chapter 8. This ministry is for every member, not just leaders and elected officers.

2. After you are baptized and join the church, what do you do? Eat!

That is what 9:19a says. Christians like to be with Christians. Look at the example that Jesus left. Turn back a few pages to John 21:6-14. Jesus grilled fish for His disciples. I loved grilled salmon wrapped in grapes leaves at Green Valley Grille. I doubt Jesus grilled salmon, but you know what ever He grilled was good. But this was the 3rd time Jesus had appeared to His disciples as a group after His resurrection.

Jesus met with two disciples on the road to Emmaus right after His resurrection and ate with them (Luke 24:30). Jesus met with His disciples as a group on the first Easter Sunday when Thomas was not present and ate with them (Luke 24:42). He ate “broiled fish and honeycomb.” Jesus met with His disciples one week later when Thomas was present and eating is not mentioned (John 20:24). Maybe it is just assumed they were eating. Jesus met with His disciples for the third time and grilled fish for them (John 21:12).

Ananias helped Paul make new Christian friends. John in First John is teaching believers how to have assurance of salvation or as John says “Know” you are a believer (5:13). How can you know you are a believer? There are three tests:

- 1) You believe that Jesus is the Son of God (5:1a, 5). Doctrinal Test.
- 2) You love God’s people (5:1b). Social Test.
- 3) You obey God’s Word (5:2). Moral Test.

Ananias got Paul involved in a small group (Acts 9:19b). It was not enough just to join the church. Paul needed to get in a small group to build relationships and friendships. Even Jesus had 12 men He associated with for three years. Paul from this point will surround himself with a group of disciples. We need each other.

3. Disciples identify believers with God’s work (Acts 9:15-16).

What Jesus informed Ananias about Paul in Acts 9:15-16, Ananias does tell him in 22:14-15.

Believers have been chosen by God. Paul you will be rejected by men because of your witness, but you have not been rejected by God. All believers have been chosen by God according to Jesus in John 15:16.

Jill Morgan, the daughter-in-law of G. Campbell Morgan, wrote in her book, *A MAN OF THE WORD*, “In 1888 my father-in-law was rejected for the ministry. Morgan was seeking entrance into the Wesleyan ministry in 1888. He had passed his written exam but

faced the test of giving a trial sermon in front of a panel. When the results were released, Morgan had been rejected. He wired to his father the one word, "Rejected," and sat down to write in his diary: "Very dark everything seems. Still, He knoweth best." Quickly came the reply: "*Rejected* on earth. Accepted in heaven. Dad." (*Source unknown*). As G. Campbell Morgan went on to prove, rejection on earth is often of little consequence in heaven.

"Ananias the obscure, never heard of before or since, the first example of a historical pattern that great ambassadors for Christ, however much prepared in other ways, are brought to their vocation by unimportant agents. Augustine hears a child's voice repeat, 'Take up and read!' John Wesley listens to an anonymous Moravian reading Luther; D. L. Moody, wrapping up shoes in a store, pauses for a few words from his Sunday School teacher; Charles Haddon Spurgeon, sheltering from a snowstorm, hears a workingman in a snowbound minister's pulpit" (John Pollock. *The Man Who Shook the World*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 1973, 22).