FOUR MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP
(Sermon)
June 3, 2023
Dr. Jim Zackrison
Special Consultant, Voice of Prophecy Discover Bible Schools
North American Division

Please note: The Bible texts used are mostly from the New International Version because it speaks in up-to-date American English. Any version in English you are comfortable with will tell the same story. Whatever version you prefer in your personal language will also tell the same story and relay the same message.

Purpose: Identify, empathize, illustrate, and appeal to practice four marks of discipleship as presented in Acts, chapter 9.

Introduction
Saul, a young, determined Pharisee was no one to take lightly. He would describe himself as “a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees” (Acts 23:6). When some people questioned his background, he pointed out “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I” (2 Corinthians 11:22).

When we meet him in the book of Acts, Saul is a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling organization. His assignment is to hunt down and eliminate a group of renegade Jews who had become followers of a man from up north in Galilee who had caused a lot of trouble in Jerusalem. “Saul,” the record reads, “was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” (Acts 9:1).

I. The Way
Saul requested letters of authorization allowing him to do house-to-house searches in Damascus, up north in Syria.

A. The Way – (capital W)
The new Christian church as yet had no name. It was just a group of people who were followers of the troublesome Jew mentioned above. However, the Old Testament, the only Bible they had at that time, has something to say about the Way (capital W):
1. God’s Way is perfect. 2 Samuel 22:31 - “As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless.”
2. His Way is not hidden. Psalms 103:7 - “He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.”
3. His Way is not unknowable or secret. Psalms 27:11 - “Teach me your way, LORD, and lead me in a straight path.”
4. His Way works. Psalms 37:5 - “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will do this.”
5. The wrong Way doesn’t work. Isaiah 55:7 - “Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts.”
6. There is no alternative Way. Isaiah 30:21 - “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’ ”

**B. Saul suddenly** got a new insight into this “Way” – Acts 9 tells the story.
1. The followers of the Way knew that Jesus, the troublesome Jew Saul didn’t believe in, was, in His own words, “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).
2. *This is a good point to relate the experience of Saul’s conversion* (Acts 9:3-7). This was the moment when Saul learned that “No one comes to the Father except through me [Jesus]. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well” (John 14:6-7).

**C. Damascus**
1. **Saul started out** for Damascus—a dedicated heresy hunter determined to eliminate a new group of troublemakers who, in his opinion, were corrupting the beliefs of his religious convictions.
2. **He starts out** for Damascus as an official representative with official documents to present to officials in the city, giving him official authority to eliminate his targets.
3. **He arrives in** Damascus blind, confused, with no official anything, sitting in the house of someone named Judas (v. 11) wondering what had happened! The street the house was on was called “Straight,” but Saul was completely confused, unraveled, and anything but “straight.”
4. Sitting there, he did what any good Pharisee would do—he fasted and prayed. (Acts 9:9,11)

**II. Ananias**
The Bible calls Ananias a “disciple.” He was not one of the original 12. He was a convert to the “Way.” He was one of the “heretics” Saul was originally after (Acts 9:13).  
- What does a disciple do when he or she gets a call from the same Jesus who appeared to Saul on the road?
- Saul was confused. Ananias had no reason to be confused. He already knew who Jesus was.

**A. The four marks of discipleship**
1. **Available.** Acts 9:10. The Lord spoke to Ananias, and his answer was “Yes, Lord.”  
   - That is the correct answer a disciple will always make!
   - No follower of the Lord knows when she or he might get a call from the Lord.
   - Ananias did not enter into any negotiations with the Lord. Maybe he remembered Isaiah’s words “And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ ” (Isaiah 6:8).
   - He simply said “Yes.”
   **A disciple is always available.**

2. **Willing.** Acts 9:14. This was no easy assignment.
   - Not only was Ananias told to go, but he was also informed that the Lord had already informed Saul that one Ananias (by name) would appear at the house.
• Not only that, but Jesus had also already told Saul that Ananias would work a miracle and restore his sight!

Question: Does the Lord have enough confidence in you as a disciple to tell someone beforehand that you (by name) will appear?

• Ananias immediately presented his fears and concerns. “We know this man.” “We know why he is here.”


A disciple is responsible!

• He was going into an unknown situation.
• He was going into a possibly dangerous situation.
• He was going where he really didn’t dare to go.
• He was going to face the worst enemy the fledgling church had at that moment.
• He was supposed to perform a miracle.
• And that worse enemy already knew his name! In spite of all this, Ananias, the disciple, went.
• A disciple is always responsible. He or she does what the Lord wants them to do.

4. Adjusted Attitude

This is the most amazing thing about Ananias the disciple.

Face to face with the heresy hunter. Maybe trembling. Not knowing if the whole thing was a trap of some kind. Ananias speaks the first words we know of that Saul hears from a disciple.

• Ananias could have said, “I know who you are!”
• Ananias could have said, “You got what you deserved.”
• Ananias could have said, “Now you’re in our hands, and the Way will deal with you.”
• Ananias could have said a lot of things.

But the first word Ananias said to Saul was “Brother.”

• Can you imagine the impact that word must have had on Saul?

Disciples have one assignment—to present the Gospel and the Advent Message to a lot of spiritually blind, uncouth, unbelieving, unwilling, pagan, uninterested, criminally involved, wrong-headed people walking around on streets that are anything but “straight”!

• A disciple of Jesus has to do, with the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, a lot of attitude adjusting.

III. Conclusion

1. How it all came out.

• Ananias did his job as a disciple.
• Saul’s eyes were opened. He got both physical and spiritual “sight.”
• Saul turned into Paul, the great apostle and evangelist of the apostolic church era.
The four marks of discipleship are still in place.

1. Available
2. Willing
3. Responsible
4. Adjusted attitude

The Lord’s call to disciples remains, “Let us examine our ways and test them.” (Lamentations 3:40).