

DISCIPLESHIP. LESSON 2

1	PRAYER
----------	--------

Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> MATTHEW 4:12 – 7:29
----------	--

Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Matthew 4:12 – 7:29).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

3	MEMORISATION (20 minutes) <i>[ASSURANCES]</i> (1) JOHN 10:28
----------	---

A. MOTIVATION (for memorisation)

Read Ephesians 6:11,17; Matthew 4:2-4 (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Discover and discuss. Why is it important to memorise Bible verses (passages or chapters)?

Notes. Memorised Bible verses will help you to overcome the powers of evil.

B. MEDITATION (of a Bible passage)

The first series (A) of memory verses is about "Assurances". The titles of the five memory verses are:

- (1) Assurance of salvation. John 10:28
- (2) Assurance of answered prayer. John 16:24
- (3) Assurance of victory. 1 Corinthians 10:13
- (4) Assurance of forgiveness. 1 John 1:9
- (5) Assurance of God's guidance. Proverbs 3:5-6

The memorisation verse. (1) Assurance of salvation. John 10:28. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

1. The meaning of eternal life.

What is "eternal life"? Eternal life is a new kind of life. It is a wonderful life, a meaningful life, a challenging life, an exiting life and a satisfying life! It is a life that never ends! Above all it is a relationship with the Living God through Jesus Christ. It is a personal relationship with and a personal knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

2. How to acquire eternal life.

It is a gracious gift! God gives eternal life to people only through one person in history, namely, through Jesus Christ. Eternal life cannot be earned (for example, by keeping the law or joining a church), but can only be received as a free gift. When you receive Jesus Christ into your heart and life, you also receive this eternal life! If someone does not receive Jesus Christ, he also does not receive eternal life.

3. Three assurances for the believer.

He has already now eternal life and it will never end!

In the final judgement he will not be condemned (doomed). He will not perish in hell.

Nothing and no one is able to snatch him out of the hands of Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 8:38-39).

C. MEMORISATION

1. Write

Write the Bible verse on a blank card or on one page of your small notebook as follows: Write the topic or title on the first line. Write the Bible reference of the verse on the second line. Draw a line and then write the text of the Bible verse line by line beneath that. Write the Bible reference of the verse at the bottom of the page and on the back of the card.

(1)

Write the following memorisation verse on a white or blackboard as follows:

Assurance of salvation John 10:28
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.
John 10:28

John 10:28

2. Memorise

Memorise the Bible verse in the right way.

- Always START with the topic or title, the Bible reference and the first line of the Bible verse.
- When you can quote this without a mistake, ADD the second line of the Bible verse and REPEAT FROM THE BEGINNING, that is, the topic, the reference and the two lines of the verse.
- When you can quote this without a mistake, ADD the third line of the Bible verse and REPEAT FROM THE BEGINNING, that is, the topic, the reference and the three lines of the verse. Etc.
- Continue this until you can repeat the topic, the Bible reference, the whole text and the Bible reference at the end of the verse with ease and without a mistake.

Do not memorise the Bible verse in separate pieces, because in that way you do not *memorise the links* between the pieces. Always start from the beginning, each time you repeat the verse.

Always END by repeating the Bible reference once more, because the Bible reference is the most difficult part to remember.

Thus, the right sequence for Bible memorisation is:

- the topic
- the Bible reference
- the text of the Bible verse
- and the Bible reference again.

4	BIBLE STUDY (70 minutes) <i>[QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE]</i> (1) HOW DO I RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD? LUKE 8:4-15
----------	---

The purpose of studying the Bible together as a group is to grow together in a relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another. It is to help one another to gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible and to practise its truths. For this reason it is important that the group members encourage one another to participate in the Bible study discussion. The input of every group member is important. Nobody should be put off if what he says turns out not to be completely correct (theologically). The group leader should rather encourage the group members to learn together by discovering and discussing the truths from the Bible. Every group member should feel that the other group members *listen* when he speaks, *take him seriously* and *accept* him. The group members are not competing with one another in Bible knowledge, but love one another by encouraging one another to grow and to share confidently.

In DOTA manual 1 there are 6 Bible studies about "the questions of life":

- (1) How do I respond to God's Word?
- (2) Where do I come from?
- (3) Who am I?
- (4) Why am I here?
- (5) Where am I going?
- (6) How do I bear fruit?

The example of the Bible study below is designed to assist the group leader when he prepares the Bible study or to help the group when they discuss a difficult question. Your Bible study discussion may have different things that the group members discover and different questions that the group members ask.

Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study Luke 8:4-15 together.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ Luke 8:4-15 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?	

Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.
Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share).
Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered.
(The following are examples of people sharing what they have discovered. Remember, in every small group, the group members will share different things, not necessarily these things)

8:15

Discovery 1. There are three persons who want to do something with the Word of God that is sown into my heart.

First, there is Christ, who sows his Word onto my heart. He wants his Word to bear fruit in my life. Secondly, there is the devil, who tries to take God's Word away from my heart. He does not want the Word to have any influence in my life. Thirdly, there is me. I have the responsibility to do something with the Word that Christ sows onto my heart. If I hear it and retain it in a good and noble heart, then by persevering I can produce a crop. But if I don't do anything with Christ's Word, then I will lose it completely. A very important truth for me in this Bible passage is that it is *my responsibility* to do something with God's words. Every time I hear the words of the Bible, it is my responsibility to put them into practise.

8:12

Discovery 2. Not only the devil tries to take God's Word away from my heart.

Verse 14 describes all the other enemies of God's Word. It says that God's Word gets choked to death by the worries of life, by the desire to get rich and by living a life of pleasure. The sinful world outside me as well as the sinful nature inside me is the other big enemies of Christ. They don't want the Word of Christ to bear fruit in my life. Therefore they choke the Word of God to death. A very important truth for me in this Bible passage is that it is my responsibility to be watchful and not allow worries, wealth or pleasures to choke the Word of God in me to death.

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Luke 8:4-15 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

8:5

Question 1. What does "the seed" represent?

Notes. The seed represents the Word of God (Luke 8:11), especially the message about the kingdom (Matthew 13:19), which begins with the gospel (cf. Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:24-25; Acts 28:23).

The kingdom of God is the kingship or sovereign reign of God in Jesus Christ over all and everything, especially over the hearts and lives of his own people (the believers) (Luke 17:20-21). It results in their complete salvation from beginning to end (Mark 10:25-26), their constitution as one Church on earth (Matthew 16:18-19), their influence and good works in every aspect of human society (Matthew 25:34-36, Romans 14:17) and finally in the renewal of everything, that is, the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth (1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Revelation 11:15; 21:5).

8:5-8

Question 2. What does each of the four different kinds of soil represent?

Notes. In the days of Jesus, the farmers did not have machinery to sow their seed. They used their hands to scatter the seed to the left and to the right as they walked. So some of the seeds would fall on the path on which the farmer was walking. And some of the seeds would fall on bad patches of soil where there was rock under a shallow layer of soil. Some of the seeds would fall on patches where thorns were growing. And some of the seeds would fall on good and clean soil.

The four kinds of soil represent four different conditions and attitudes of our own heart (Luke 8:12; Matthew 13:19) and not four kinds of people in the world.

8:10

Question 3. Why is the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom only given to the disciples?

Notes. This seems unfair, but is not! “The secrets of the kingdom of God” is the message of the whole New Testament. After the first coming of Jesus Christ, it is no more an unknown secret, but a revealed truth.

However, Christ does not reveal this truth or message to everybody. Although many people hear the gospel and the New Testament teachings, they do not really hear and turn to God, because they have hardened their hearts! Christ quotes these words from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

(1) This pronouncement in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 1:2-15 we read that the children of Israel rebelled against God and became corrupt. In Isaiah 6:9-10 God judges them and says, “Make the heart of this people callous; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” The Israelites had seen so many miracles and heard so many good words of the prophets and yet, by their own choice, they had hardened their hearts against God. So God allowed them to become what they wanted to be! God gave them over to the consequences of their own choices! They had closed their eyes and ears – so now God made their eyes and ears even more tightly shut! They reaped what they themselves had sown (Galatians 6:7-8)!

(2) This pronouncement in the New Testament.

In Matthew 12 we read that the Pharisees and many other Jews rebelled against Jesus Christ and became corrupt. They criticised Jesus (Matthew 12:2), condemned the innocent people (Matthew 12:7), set traps for Jesus (Matthew 12:10), plotted to kill Jesus (Matthew 12:14) and even blasphemed Jesus by saying that he drives out demons with the power of Satan (Matthew 12:24). In Matthew 13:10-15 (Luke 8:10), Jesus judges them with the same judgement of the Old Testament. They had seen the miracles of Jesus Christ and had heard his many teachings and yet they too had refused to believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, they are judged in the same way. They had hardened themselves against Jesus Christ. So now Jesus Christ gives them over to the consequences of their own choices! He allows them to become what they wanted to be! They may still hear the gospel and the Bible messages, but they will no longer be able to understand them anymore and they will no longer be able to repent. They reaped what they sowed (Galatians 6:7-8)!

(3) This pronouncement today.

Every person has a responsibility to respond to the words of God in the Bible. If your attitude is like that of the Pharisees and you constantly criticise Christ, then your heart will also be hardened and you will not be able to enter into God’s kingdom. However, every person who sincerely responds to God’s Word need not have any fear. Every good and clean heart will respond to God’s Word, will grow and will bear fruit!

Summary. Everyone, who hardens his heart against the God of the Bible and the words of God in the Bible, will eventually become so hardened that he can no longer hear the Word of God.

But everyone, who sincerely responds to God and his Word, will understand it, will grow and will bear fruit! A sincere seeker of Jesus Christ will never be rejected (John 6:37)!

8:12

Question 4. What does the soil as hard as the path represent?

Notes. The path is a picture of a hardened, insensible and unresponsive heart.

Whenever my heart has this condition or attitude, I DO NOT RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD AT ALL. I constantly think that God’s Word contains nothing of importance for me. I make no effort to understand the message of the Bible (Matthew 13:19) or I put off my response to it. Consequently, my heart grows indifferent and becomes hardened. Satan knows the potential power of God’s Word and is ever ready to snatch away what is left unaccepted!

The main lesson is to make every effort to HEAR and UNDERSTAND God’s Word (the message of the Bible) (Matthew 13:23) and then to ACCEPT it (Mark 4:20) whenever I hear, read or study it! I must immediately deal with my attitudes of indifference, procrastination or hostility!

8:12

Question 5. Why does the devil want take away God’s Word from our hearts?

Notes. The devil wants to take away God’s Word from our hearts, because God’s Word is a powerful means to save us and change us! Everyone who believes in God’s Word is saved (Romans 10:17). This means that he is snatched away from the devil and out of the devil’s kingdom! The Lord Jesus Christ robs the strong man (the devil) from his possessions (Matthew 12:28-29; John 12:31-32). The Bible says, “God rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Colossians 1:13). Because God’s Word (the Bible) is God’s means to save and change people, the devil will try every trick in the world to take God’s Word away from the hearts of people! Beware! Jesus has warned us!

8:13

Question 6. What does the rocky soil represent?

Notes. The rocky soil is a picture of a shallow, rootless and impulsive heart.

Whenever my heart has this condition or attitude, I RESPOND TOO RASHLY TO GOD'S WORD. During meetings, I get excited and emotionally affected by the message and the personal appeal of the speaker. Impulsively I jump up to accept Jesus, to accept the message or to make some decisions.

But I do not think about the meaning of the words and I do not consider the consequences of God's Word. When the people of the world begin to threaten me or persecute me because of the message in the Bible, I lose interest in God's Word, stop to follow Jesus and fall away. Then I have "no roots", that is, I accept the message, but without conviction. My confession of faith does not spring from my inner conviction. Therefore I do not persevere and retain God's Word. I fail to consider that true discipleship implies self-surrender, self-denial, sacrifice, service and suffering. I do not count the cost of becoming a believer or remaining a believer. I fail to realise that the way to God goes only past the cross. The cross symbolises suffering. That is why I only last for a little while.

The main lesson is to RETAIN God's Word (Luke 8:15) and to continue to believe and to obey it under all circumstances! I must immediately deal with my tendency only to be emotionally touched when I hear God's Word!

8:14

Question 7. What does the soil with thorns represent?

Notes. The soil with the thorns is a picture of a divided and pre-occupied heart.

Whenever my heart has this condition or attitude, I RESPOND TO OTHER THINGS BESIDES GOD'S WORD. My heart is divided between the things of this world and the things of God. I give so much room in my heart to worry about my daily work and life, or to dream and plan about how to make more money, or to enjoy all the pleasures of life, that my heart does not really have room for God's Word. Then I am continuously distracted by the things of the world and have the wrong priorities. Then I am so pre-occupied with the things of the world, that I give no time to meditate on God's Word or practise God's Word. The result is that God's Word in my heart is choked. Consequently, I cannot grow to maturity and I can also not bear any fruit for God.

The main lesson is to KEEP MY HEART CLEAN, HONEST AND GOOD (Luke 8:15). I must keep it free from the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, the pleasures of the world and the wrong desires. I must immediately deal with my worries, my tendency to be materialistic and with my wrong desires and wrong priorities.

8:15

Question 8. What does the good soil represent?

Notes. The good soil is a picture of a well-prepared (clean and noble) that responds to God's Word, retains it and bears fruit with perseverance. Whenever my heart has this condition or attitude, I RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD IN THE WAY THAT JESUS CHRIST WOULD LIKE ME TO RESPOND. When my heart has this condition or attitude, then my heart is the opposite of the conditions and attitudes of the first three hearts.

The main lessons are:

(1) In contrast to the first soil (state of the heart), this person HEARS, UNDERSTANDS and ACCEPTS God's WORD (the Bible) (Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:20). God's Word saves and changes him (Luke 8:12).

(2) In contrast to the second soil (state of the heart), this person counts the cost of entering God's kingdom and discipleship (of believing and obeying these words). He RETAINS God's Word and clings to it under all difficult circumstances (Luke 8:15).

(3) In contrast to the third soil (state of the heart), this person KEEPS HIS HEART CLEAN and free from whatever can choke God's Word (Luke 8:15). For example, I keep it clean from worries, money and worldly pleasures.

(4) The fourth soil (state of the heart) is a description of Jesus Christ would like to see that happens every time a person hears, reads or studies the Bible! He loves to see him retain God's Word with conviction and BEAR FRUIT FOR GOD WITH EFFORT AND PERSEVERANCE (Luke 8:15). Sometimes he will bear thirty times more fruit and sometimes a hundred times more fruit (Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:20)!

8:15

Question 9. Is this parable a message for the preachers of God's Word or a message for the receivers of God's Word?

Notes. This parable is in the first place not a parable about a sower, the preachers of God's Word, but a parable about the receivers of God's Word. The parable does not simply tell us that the preacher must expect only a quarter of the world to respond to God's Word and the rest remain unfruitful. A parable has one clear message!

The parable teaches us that all people in the world, including preachers, can respond in four different ways to God's Word every time they hear it! The attitude of the hearer and the condition of his heart at any given time determine the effect that God's Word will have on him!

Jesus tells this parable to us to make us realise our responsibility to God's Word. Our responsibility to God's Word is:

Every human being is responsible to KEEP HIS HEART CLEAN and TO DO SOMETHING WITH THE WORD OF GOD. And every human being is responsible to HEAR, UNDERSTAND, ACCEPT, RETAIN the Word of God and allow it to BEAR FRUIT. To "accept" means to accept the Word of God as "correct and true" (cf. Acts 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

8:15

Question 10. How can I persevere to produce a crop?

Notes. The devil is around me, the materialistic world is outside me and the sinful nature is inside me. Because they all fight against me, I must fight back continually. How do I persevere?

- I will persevere when I continually hear, read, study, memorise, meditate and apply God's Words in the Bible to my own life and when I pass them on to other people.
 - I will persevere when I continue in these disciplines even when I face difficulties and persecution.
 - I will persevere when I have the right condition and attitude of heart, that is, when I have a clean and undivided heart.
 - I will persevere when I allow God's Word to change my thinking, feelings and behaviour.
 - I must decide not to give up. I must persevere. I can persevere, because God promised to be with me (Matthew 28:20).
-

Question 11. What is the summary message of this parable?

Notes. The message of this parable is that

(1) THE CONDITION OR ATTITUDE OF MY HEART DETERMINES THE RESPONSE I GIVE TO GOD'S WORD.

(2) AND THE RESPONSE I GIVE TO GOD'S WORD DETERMINES HOW MUCH FRUIT I WILL BEAR FOR GOD.

Or:

(1) THE FRUIT (INFLUENCE, EFFECT, RESULT) OF MY LIFE IS DETERMINED BY HOW I RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD.

(2) AND THE WAY I RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD IS DETERMINED BY THE ATTITUDE AND CONDITION OF MY HEART.

Every day you get a new chance to choose the state of your heart with which you respond to God's Word. You are able to immediately let go of a wrong attitude and respond with the right attitude! But Luke 8:10 warns that there also comes a time when the opportunity (chance) to change your attitude has passed forever!

This is a warning for those people who do not respond to God's Word. But it is also a great encouragement and hope for those people who want to change the attitude of their heart. Every time I hear, read or study the Bible, I can immediately change my attitude and hear, understand, accept, retain in a clean heart and bear fruit with perseverance!

The seven principles for Bible study are:

- (1) THE WORD OF GOD (BIBLE), not any kind of spiritual book (Luke 8:11)
- (2) A CLEAN HEART, give no room for thorns and thistles (Luke 8:15).
- (3) HEAR (Matthew 13:23)
- (4) UNDERSTAND (Matthew 13:19,23)
- (5) ACCEPT (Mark 4:20)
- (6) RETAIN (HOLD ON TO) (Luke 8:15)
- (7) BEAR FRUIT WITH PERSEVERANCE (Matthew 13:23; Luke 8:15)

Remember:

"The Word of God does not return empty to God"
(Isaiah 55:10-11)!

When you understand this parable, you possess the key to understand every part of the Bible
(Mark 4:13)!

STEP 4. APPLY.**APPLICATIONS**

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Luke 8:4-15.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Luke 8:4-15.

8:8b-10. Listen very well to the preaching of the Bible.

Try and understand the messages of the Bible (Matthew 13:19,23; Mark 4:13).

8:11. Make a decision to take the Bible very serious and respond to its messages.

8:12. Believe the messages of the Bible in order to be saved.

8:13. Develop personal convictions from the messages of the Bible. Do not simply have knowledge about the Bible.

8:15. Meditate on and memorise some Bible verses in order to retain them in your life.

8:15. Make sure that your heart is clean and undivided every time you read or study the Bible.

8:15. Bear fruit by regularly applying the messages of the Bible.

2. Examples of personal applications from Luke 8:4-15.

God wants me to *understand* the Bible every time I hear it, so that the devil cannot take it away from my heart. Therefore I want to do one Bible study every week. Doing Bible Study every week will help me to understand God's Word much better.

God wants me to grow and to bear fruit. Therefore, every time I read and study the Bible, I will ask myself the question, "How can this Word of God change me or influence others?" And then I will try to put it into practise.

STEP 5. PRAY.**RESPONSE**

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Luke 8:4-15.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON

(**Group leader.** Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Make a commitment to respond to the things God says to you in the Bible. Make a commitment to do Bible study very regularly.
2. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter from Matthew 8:1 – 11:24 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. **Memorisation.** Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (1) Assurance of salvation: John 10:28. Daily review every new memorised Bible verse 5 weeks long.
4. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. **Update your notebook** on making disciples. Include the notes on your personal time with God, memorisation notes, Bible study notes and this preparation.