

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share with one another what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will first explain how to have a quiet time. Then we will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM MATTHEW 15:1 – 18:20.

(S) **POINT 1. HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME AND SHARE**

Have a time of fellowship with God or quiet time every day of the week from one of the seven assigned Bible passages. An easy quiet time method is called "The favourite truth" method. It has 5 steps. Step 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you. Step 2. Read one of the seven assigned passages. Step 3. Choose your favourite truth. It is the truth, verse or passage through which God is speaking to you, stimulating your thinking or touching your heart. Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth. Meditate by doing the following four things. First. *Think* about the meaning of words. Second. *Ask* God what he intends to say to you. Third. *Relate* your favourite truth to your life by making a practical application. Fourth. *Write* the most important thoughts of your meditation in a notebook so that you may share them with others. Step 5. Pray your favourite truth for yourself. Then pray your favourite truth for someone in your family. Then pray your favourite truth for someone nearby. And finally, pray your favourite truth for someone far away. When you meet together with one friend or with other Christians in a house fellowship or discipleship group, take turns to share the meditation of one of your quiet times. You may also try to answer some questions from the assigned passages.

(T) **POINT 2. SHARING FROM MATTHEW 15:1 – 18:20**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Matthew 15:1 – 18:20. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from Matthew chapter 15.

(S) I want to share from Matthew 15:7 about traditions. Jesus says to the Pharisees, "You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition." What is the place of traditions in the Christian faith? The question here was the tradition of the elders that required washing hands before each meal. Now the Old Testament required holiness, and this holiness had to be expressed outwardly in ceremonial washing, sometimes of clothes and sometimes of hands. But nowhere does the Bible require the washing of hands connected to meals. The Jewish teachers after the exile wanted to serve God wholeheartedly, but in their eagerness they went beyond the Bible and made hundreds of new regulations and laws, which became traditions after some time. The teachers of the law taught children in the synagogue schools to memorise hundreds of these traditions. These traditions were regarded to be as binding as the Law. For example, if you touched a Gentile or something belonging to him, then you were unclean and could not worship in the temple. Outward conformity to traditions became more important than true worship and sincere attitudes of the heart. Jesus therefore accused the Pharisees of making their traditions more important than the Bible!

My church also has certain traditions, which developed over the past years. I must test these traditions. Also the culture of my country has certain traditions, which developed over hundreds of years. I must also test these traditions. Whenever a tradition does not violate the teaching of the Bible, it may be kept. For example, the tradition to eat with your right hand, or with chopsticks or with a spoon does not violate the teaching of the Bible and may be kept. Likewise, the tradition to honour parents and to care for their needs may be kept. However, whenever a tradition violates a clear teaching of the Bible, I must let go of this tradition. For example, the tradition to *absolutely* obey your parents, your teacher, older people and the government is not correct. Adult children must take responsibility for their own lives and are accountable to God, not to their parents. And we may only obey the laws of our government when these laws do not violate the clear teachings of the Bible.

(T) I want to share from Matthew 15:13-14 about the plants, which God has not planted. Jesus says, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by its roots. Leave them; they are blind guides." Jesus had just exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who made tremendous efforts to keep their man-made traditions at the expense of God's Word. The Pharisees were offended. Jesus said that God did not plant the Pharisees and their kind of people. On the Judgement Day they would be uprooted and thrown into the fire of hell. Therefore, the disciples should "let them go". The disciples should pay no attention to them and have nothing to do with them.

For me this is a serious statement. There are only two kinds of people - those who are planted by God and those who are like weeds sown by the devil (Matthew 13:39). Unless God plants a person, he cannot be saved! It is the same as Jesus said in the Gospel of John, "Do not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again. Otherwise you cannot enter the kingdom of God! Every human being needs God. I rejoice that God has planted me! The people God planted are therefore called "God's field" in 1 Corinthians 3:9 and "a well-watered garden" in Isaiah 58:11. And they are compared to "a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither" in Psalm 1:3 and to a flourishing palm tree and a tall growing cedar tree, which still bear fruit in old age and stay fresh and green in Psalm 92:12-14.

(S) I want to share from Matthew 15:29-39 about the miracle of feeding 4,000 people in comparison to his miracle of feeding 5,000 people earlier Matthew 14:13-21. In both cases the crowds of people had followed Jesus to a lonely place. There, Jesus healed their sick people and taught them. They had nothing left to eat. Jesus used a small number of bread and fish to feed thousands of people and afterwards they picked up baskets full of leftovers. Jesus is not only able to perform great miracles like feeding 5,000 people. He is able to repeat great miracles, like feeding 4,000! Jesus proves that he is always ready to help. While the 5,000 were in Jewish territory, the 4,000 were definitely in Gentile territory. Jesus showed that his love goes out to both Jews and Gentiles.

Sharing quiet times from Matthew chapter 16.

(T) I want to share from Matthew 16:3 about interpreting the signs of the times. People could interpret the signs of good and bad weather and signs of the spring or autumn seasons. But when Jesus came to earth, people could not interpret the signs of the times. Jesus healed the sick, drove out demons, delivered the handicapped, exposed legalism, taught with authority about the kingdom of God, forgave sins and saved people who believed. These were “the signs of the times”. These were things prophesied hundreds of years before and were now being fulfilled. The coming Messiah had arrived. And yet the people did not recognise that the kingdom of God had made a beginning with the arrival of the king, Jesus Christ. I prayed and asked God to open my eyes to see clearly what is happening in the world and to be able to interpret the signs of the times. Before the end of the present world history, there will again be new signs of the times.

(S) I want to share from Matthew 16:18-19 about the rock on which the Church is built. Jesus gave the apostle Peter the name “Peter”, which means, “rock”. Then Jesus continues to say “on this rock will I build my Church.” Some Christians believe that “this rock” refers to Christ, whom Peter had just confessed. It is true that Christ is the only true “foundation” of the Church (1 Corinthians 3:11). But in this context, the word “rock” can only refer to the immediate preceding name “Peter”. How was Christ going to build the Church on the apostle Peter? He was not going to build the Church on Peter as he was by nature, a weak unstable person, but on Peter, as he would become by grace, a courageous, enthusiastic and effective witness of Jesus Christ. He was not going to build the Church on Peter all by himself, but on Peter as the first among the other apostles (Matthew 10:2). The authority, which Christ entrusted to Peter in Matthew 16:19, he also gave to the other apostles in Matthew 18:18 and to the local congregation in Matthew 18:17. He did not give to Peter the authority to lord it over the other disciples or the whole Church. Instead, he taught, “whoever wants to be the first, must be the slave” (Matthew 20:27). Later, Peter himself taught that the leaders in the Church might never lord it over any believer (1 Peter 5:3).

Thus, Jesus Christ is the real foundation of the Church. The apostles are in a secondary sense the foundation of the historical Church (Ephesians 2:20). And Peter is among the apostles “the rock” of the Church. Christ himself is the builder and owner of the Church. He makes use of the apostles and especially of the apostle Peter to build the first churches in history. In Acts 2, Peter preached the gospel to the Jews and the first church among the Jews was established in Jerusalem. In Acts 8, Peter prayed for the Samaritans and the first church among the Samaritans was established. In Acts 10, Peter preached the gospel to the first Gentiles and the first church among the Gentiles was established in Caesarea. Peter was thus the most influential means of the growth of the Christian Church in the very beginning.

(T) I want to share from Matthew 16:27-28 about when the kingdom began and about the Second Coming. First Jesus says that during his Second Coming he is going to come back in glory, with angels and with rewards. Second, he says that some of his disciples will not taste death before they see Jesus Christ coming in his kingdom. Jesus does not say that his Second Coming was going to take place very soon, within the lifetime of some of his disciples. Jesus says that only at his future Second Coming will people see his glory, his angels and his rewards. But already very soon his disciples will see the beginning of that glory when Jesus Christ rises from the dead, ascends into heaven, pours out the Holy Spirit and begins to extend his kingdom vigorously all over the world.

Sharing quiet times from Matthew chapter 17.

(S) I want to share from Matthew 17:1-13 about the transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus had chosen three disciples to go with him to a high mountain. Peter was the one who confessed Jesus as the Coming Messiah. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved and James would become the first apostle to be martyred. Jesus really underwent a change of appearance, but not a change of nature, because he was not yet resurrected from the dead. The two great prophets, Moses and Elijah, appeared with Jesus. Precisely these two prophets appeared, because Moses represented the Old Testament Law and Elijah represented the Old Testament Prophets. God confirmed to the three apostles that Jesus Christ was really the Messiah, who was foretold in the Law and Prophets. And God prepared Jesus to face his coming suffering on the cross by reminding of the glory that would follow his suffering.

(T) I want to share from Matthew 17:11-13 about the prophet Elijah. The prophet Malachi prophesied that Elijah would come before the Messiah would come. Now that Christ, the Messiah had already come, the disciples wondered about this prophecy. The learned men of the Jews interpreted the prophecy literally and said that Elijah had not yet come and then when he comes he will bring a spiritual restoration to the Jews. But Jesus told the disciples that the “Elijah”, which the prophet Malachi prophesied, had already come and that he was John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14). Although John the Baptist denied that he was literally the prophet Elijah (John 1:21), he could not deny what the angel had said to his father in Luke 1:16-17. The angel had said that John the Baptist would go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to bring many fathers and children in Israel back to God. Jesus clearly teaches that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy about Elijah, but that the Jews had not recognised him. The Jews had also not recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah!

(S) I want to share from Matthew 17:20 about the faith that moves mountains. Jesus said to his disciples, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” A mustard seed is very small, but by growing uninterruptedly it becomes a tree in which birds can settle down. “Faith as a mustard seed” is likewise a faith that may begin as a very small faith, but continually grows. Faith like a mustard seed is faith that does not give up in despair when its efforts are not met with immediate success. Faith like a mustard seed may be small, but is faith in God, who is the greatest and the strongest power in the universe! Faith like a mustard seed therefore knows that God will act in his own time and in his own way. Zechariah 4:6-8 speaks of the moving of a mountain. There the “mountain” is a symbol of the difficulty, which Zerubbabel faced when he was rebuilding the temple after the return from exile. Because Zerubbabel was not acting in his own power, but was depending on the Spirit of God, that “mountain” would disappear. Here in the Gospel of Matthew, “the moving of mountains” is explained as being the same as “nothing that would be impossible for you.” No task God, which God assigns to me, is going to be impossible to perform, if I remain in trustful contact with God. David says, “With God’s help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall” (Psalm 18:29). Jesus says “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26) and Paul says, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). This faith in the Almighty God, who revealed himself in the Bible, can move any difficulty, even if it is as big as a mountain.

Sharing quiet times from Matthew chapter 18.

(T) I want to share from Matthew 18:3 about becoming like little children. Jesus says, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” The disciples had been arguing about whom of them was the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus knew their thoughts and put a child as an example in their midst. Unless the disciples are converted from their worldly ambition and selfishness, they cannot enter into the kingdom at all. This is a warning to me and all other Christians. Unless I have the attitude of a child, especially to be humble and unpretentious, and to trust and obey, I cannot enter the kingdom of God.

(S) I want to share from Matthew 18:10 about angels and God’s children. It says, “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” Is it true that every child of God has his own “guardian angel” that remains with him for life, protecting him from harm and helping him in many different ways? The Bible does not teach that every Christian has a guardian angel. But the Bible does teach that all the angels are very interested in the salvation of people, defend Christians, serve the purposes of God among Christians (Hebrews 1:14) and execute judgement on God’s enemies. These angels are not simply angels of little children, but angels of all people who become like little children. All angels see God’s face and they are serving even the least in God’s kingdom. Therefore, the disciples are warned not to belittle or scorn any child of God, no matter how insignificant he may be.

(T) I want to share from Matthew 18:15-17, which speaks of rebuke and church discipline. Many Christians are afraid to rebuke another Christian, because they fear he will lose face or be shamed in front of other people. Some cultures say that “losing face” (to be shamed) is the worst that can happen to anybody. However, cultural traditions may not nullify God’s Word! Christians must obey God’s Word and rebuke one another, if necessary! How can I rebuke my brother without causing him to be shamed? Jesus teaches that when my brother sins against me, then I must go and rebuke him in private. No one else needs to know about our talk together. By not rebuking him in public, he is not shamed. If he listens to me, then I can forgive him. However, if my brother hardens his heart and refuses to repent, then I should still protect his self-respect by only taking one or two other brothers with me to talk over the problem. If he continues to harden his heart and refuses to repent from his sin, then the matter becomes more and more public. First the elders of the church should deal with the matter. If he still refuses to repent, then the elders must tell the congregation that they have tried to persuade this brother to change his life, but he refused. They should not go into any details about the offence. They should tell the congregation that this brother is no longer regarded as a member of the congregation. However, if he repents, then everybody must welcome him back into the congregation.

(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Divide Matthew 18:21 – 21:46 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio from SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.