

Mark 8

Teaching Notes

Introduction:

The approach I want to take for Mark 8 is highlighting, The Principles of Living as a Disciple of Jesus Christ.

Have you heard of the term, disciple? What is a disciple?

- Disciple: “a student, pupil, or learner.” In the New Testament, it is used for Jesus’ followers.
- Discipleship is: “the process of training people incrementally in some discipline or way of life.”

Discipleship 101:

- (1). We follow Jesus Christ, who is our Shepherd, our Pastor, Our Discipler (John 10).
- (2). The Holy Spirit is our Teacher of the teachings of Christ (John 14:26).
- (3). The Lord calls His church, you and I, by the power of the Holy Spirit “to make disciples of all nations.” (Matt.28:18-20)

What caught my attention in Mark 8 were the principles of discipleship. This text reminds us of what kind of life we are called to; what principles are important to the disciples of Jesus Christ. While we will go verse-by-verse, our primary emphasis will be: (number) principles of discipleship:

Chapter 8

Verses 1-10: 4,000 Fed

(Mark 8:1 In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them,

Mark 8:2 *“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat.*

Mark 8:3 *And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.”*

Mark 8:4 *Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?”*

Mark 8:5 *He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.”*

Mark 8:6 *So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude.*

Mark 8:7 *They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them.*

Mark 8:8 *So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments.*

Mark 8:9 *Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away,*

Mark 8:10 *immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.)*

Verses 1-3: Jesus’ Compassion

Jesus is the good and perfect shepherd. He knew the multitudes sacrificed much to be with him for 3 days. He was concerned for their physical health. And so with the perfect compassion that a perfect shepherd has for imperfect sheep, Jesus does this great miracle.

- Which brings us again to this truth clearly seen here:

The miracles of Christ find their source in Christ’s compassion for sinners.

Jesus feeds thousands of people. Mark does not clarify, but Matthew clarifies in Matthew 15 that the 4,000 did not include the women and children. So, I wonder **how many** people were fed. Amazing miracle!

Verse 4: Lack of Faith

(Mark 8:4 *Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?”*)

As disciples of Jesus, we may not:

- (1). Have compassion like Jesus has compassion.
- (2). Believe what God could do despite what we don’t have.

Over the years the Lord is teaching us how to apply this verse:

(2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*)

The apostles could not see the slightest possibility again that Christ could miraculously feed these thousands of people, like He did months back with the miraculous feeding of 5,000+.

As disciples of Christ, as followers of Christ, are you learning from past miracles in your lives? Maybe, you are like the disciples. You see God do a miracle without your faith. And another similar trial or situation presents itself, but instead of remembering Christ's power, compassion, and authority to do miracles, you are doubting.

There was something I told you to remember from Mark 6 for Mark 8. It was Mark 6:52: **(Mark 6:52** *For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.*)

The lesson God wanted to teach His apostles from the feeding of the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish was not understood because of a _____ (hardened heart). And so, the Lord gave them in chapter 8 another opportunity to learn. Yet it's clear: **the disciples did not learn the lesson again.**

Now, that is encouraging. For it reveals how much God is compassionate and patient with us. That when we fail to learn the lessons God has taught us previously, He teaches again so that we may learn. And that is the role of Christ in discipleship. He is discipling. He is teaching us how to live the Christian life, a life that walks by faith.

In context, this miracle was for the benefit of others. And so to bring an application for our lives, there are times we are presented with issues or opportunities like the apostles. But the issues and opportunities cost much more than we can personally provide financially. These things are sometimes humanly impossible to accomplish! "Lord, what can I do to help this person? Who am I to help that person and their needs? There are times we have to see

past the obstacle and be sensitive to what God wants us to do. A great example is in the lives of Peter and John:

Example: Peter and the Lame Man

(Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple for the time of prayer at three in the afternoon.

Acts 3:2 A man who was lame from birth was being carried there. He was placed each day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so that he could beg from those entering the temple.

Acts 3:3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for money.

Acts 3:4 Peter, along with John, looked straight at him and said, "Look at us."

Acts 3:5 So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them.

Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I don't have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

Acts 3:7 Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong.

Acts 3:8 So he jumped up and started to walk, and he entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.)

(Graphic 1)



Principle #1: Natural obstacles train us to walk by faith.

- Natural obstacles to God's will are designed to train us how to walk by faith and how to be led by God to serve others.
- Don't limit what God can do in you and through you because of the natural obstacles. Learn to look beyond the natural obstacle with the eyes of faith.

Verses 11-13: God's Methods

(Mark 8:11 Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.

Mark 8:12 But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

Mark 8:13 And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side.)

We know that when the Pharisees (and Sadducees as Matthew tells us they were also present here) asked for a sign they **weren't asking for miracles**. For the Pharisees and Sadducees already saw the miracles of Christ. And what did they conclude regarding the miracles of Christ?

- Mark 3:22 states that they considered Jesus to receive his power from Satan; and
- John 8:48 states that they considered Jesus to have a demon.

Speaking to the disciples on another occasion, look at what the Lord Jesus said, (**John 10:38** *but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.*)

The disciples watched this interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees. Consider how formative this was: Their Rabbi Jesus showed them that one does not consider other methods outside of God's methods; that one does not teach and do beyond the boundaries of sound doctrine.

The miracles of Christ were designed to point people to the reality that Jesus Christ is God in the Flesh. The Pharisees did not want miracles. They hated Christ and His miracles. Yet, miracles were God's chosen method to reveal the deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus' miracles were ample proof for Christ's deity. And Jesus Christ in this encounter and in John 10 that the Pharisees had every reason to believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God exclusively by His miracles.

(Graphic 2)



Principle #2: Follow God's methods.

- If God has chosen methods, stick to those methods. If God has given us boundaries of doctrine and effective ministry, stick to those boundaries.

Here's a great passage on this truth - where the Apostle Paul said,

(1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, **that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written**, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.)

- The scriptures are absolutely clear what is biblical and what is not biblical; what is effective ministry and what is not effective. Everything you need is in scripture.
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Verses 14-21: The Limitations of Faithlessness

(Mark 8:14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.

Mark 8:15 Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

Mark 8:16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread."

Mark 8:17 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?"

Mark 8:18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?

Mark 8:19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve."

Mark 8:20 "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven."

Mark 8:21 So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?"

Aren't you so thankful for the grace of God? The disciples were still not understanding **Principle #1: Natural obstacles train us how to walk by faith**. And in His grace, our Shepherd Jesus was still patient to teach them this principle of discipleship.

There is actually another principle of discipleship nestled in this text. Before I share principle #3, let me explain verse 15:

Verse 15: Leaven

(Mark 8:15 Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.")

Leaven was Jesus' metaphorical way to explain the false doctrine of the Pharisees and Herod. If unleavened bread was pure, then leaven made it impure. This was something the disciples would have been very familiar with.

You can look back to Exodus 12 when God instituted the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So this was a metaphor they would have clearly understood.

Ultimately, both the corrupting doctrines of the Pharisees and Herod Antipas are summed up in one thought: **Jesus Christ is not the Messiah, the True God in the flesh.**

And so to repeat Jesus' words, He wanted His apostles to mark and expose false and corrupt teaching.

Verse 16: What in the Connection?

(**Mark 8:16** *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread."*)

The question I have is this: How in the world did the disciples make the connection that Jesus was indirectly rebuking them concerning the lack of bread supply? How did they totally misinterpret what Jesus was telling them? Why did they jump to the most random conclusion?

Verse 17: Hardened Heart

(**Mark 8:17** *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?"*)

The Lord Jesus makes it absolutely clear that their misunderstanding is related to a hardened heart. The hearts of the apostles were still hardened at this time. In essence, because they would not walk by faith and understand the first lesson, it became difficult and impossible to walk by faith and understand the next lesson.

Their worry about where their next meal is coming from makes them deaf to the warning about not hearing and blind to the warning against blindness. Mundane concerns distract them too much, and they do not catch the ~~subtle~~ connection. They consistently fret about insufficient resources—it will take too much money to feed the crowd; there is no way the crowd can get bread in a deserted place; they have no bread. Their anxiety over such things keeps them from looking up and seeing what Jesus has done in their midst. It is as if they have tuned into Jesus with a ~~primitive crystal~~ radio set, and all they hear is a faint scratchy voice overwhelmed by background hiss.

Garland, David E. [Mark](#). Zondervan Publishing House, 1996, p. 311.

The Issue: A Hardened Heart

What is the cure to a hardened heart? A heart of faith!

Our hardened hearts (particularly a worried attitude concerning insufficient resources) will only hinder us from receiving the things God wants to teach us.

Example:

In the context, this is in reference to physical provision. So, I will speak on the subject of God our Provider, Jehovah-Jireh.

How many of you have testimonies of God financially providing for you? Maybe you had a random hospital bill that was completely unexpected. Once you saw that unexpected medical bill, you began to think, "How am I going to pay the mortgage/rent if I'm out of work for a bit? How am I going to pay the bills? How am I going to make sure there's food on the table for my kids?" And you saw God work all things out. In ways you never anticipated, the Lord cared for you and guided you. I believe many of us have these testimonies that proclaim the goodness of Jehovah-Jireh, God our Provider!

Maybe some of you today are where the disciples were at in this story. Maybe you've thought so far into the study, "why am I learning principles of discipleship right now? Why am I studying doctrine when I need to be making money right now? I'm in debt. I should be picking up another shift of work right now. I should just do church online on my time. God understands my situation with debt?"

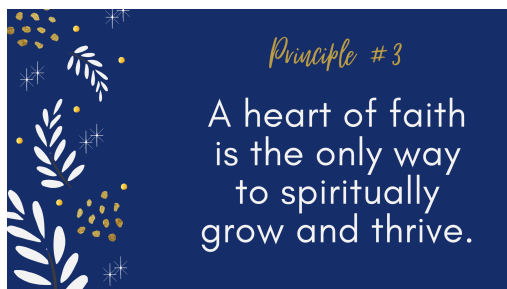
God is testing you my friend. God is trying to teach you the lesson of trusting in Him as your provider.

The saddest thing to see is this:

We hinder ourselves from the abundant life available to us when we walk by faith.

When any of us have that type of hardened heart, we need to confess and repent. We need to come back to that place of walking by faith and trusting the Lord as our provider.

(Graphic 3)



Principle #3: A heart of faith is the only way to spiritually grow and thrive.

- When you walk by faith you are able to perceive spiritual things, including the truths of God's word. When you walk by faith you are able to learn those lessons that God is teaching you. Only when you walk by faith, you are able to experience the abundant life Jesus Christ promised you.

Verses 22-26: Blind Man Healed

(Mark 8:22 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him.

Mark 8:23 So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

Mark 8:24 And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

Mark 8:25 Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

Mark 8:26 Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.")

The other gospel writers do not record this event in particular. It's exclusively in the book of Mark. I want to address a particular question that I raised myself:

Misunderstanding:

- (1). Just because the man was only partially healed the first time, this does not imply Jesus failed.
- (2). Just because a second attempt was needed, this does not imply that the first attempt was imperfect.
- (3). Just because a second attempt was successful, this does not imply that Christ lacked faith (or any thing) in the first attempt.

Biblical Truth:

[A] If all true healings are by Jesus, [B] and all of Jesus' healings are perfect, then [C] this healing (two-attempt healing) accomplished by Jesus was perfect. PERIOD.

The Big Question:

Why did Jesus take the two-step approach (gradual) rather than instant healing? The answer is very simple: **WE HAVE NO IDEA.**

- There are many ideas, thoughts, and commentaries. You're welcome to get nerdy with it. Again, the reason is **silent.**

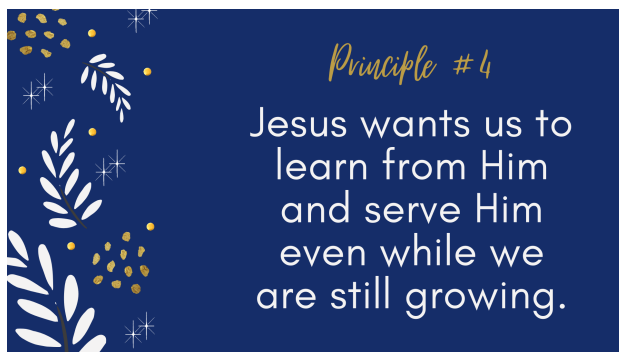
Let me repeat something I said in chapter 7: **Why would God use various methods and words to heal?** The Biblical answer is simple:

Because healing is not in a particular method or a particular word. Does God use various methods and various words? Yes! Healing is a work of God in the sovereignty of God by the power of God. Ultimately, it is God who decides to heal. **And it is so wonderful when He heals!**

Now, I'd like us to come to the principle of discipleship that we learn in this passage:

- First: Before I share this principle, I must say that in this particular healing, we don't see the response of Christ's disciples. Even though their response is not there, we know they watched Jesus heal this man.
- Second: Think again about their massive failure in verses 14-21. They were just told their hearts were hard. They were just rebuked for their lack of faith. But Jesus did not say, "You know what, you guys are just the worst disciples. I'm going on my own to Bethsaida. I'm going on my own to Caesarea. I'm going to go find new disciples. How about this, you're all going to be on time out." He had them right by his side as he continued to minister and teach them how to minister.
- It's in the obvious silence of the text where I find a very comforting principle:

(Graphic 4)



Principle #4: Jesus wants us to learn from Him and serve Him even while we are still growing.

Over the years, a recurring fear that Christians have is:

- “Oh, I can’t start serving in a ministry at church. I’m still too new in the faith. I still don’t know enough about the Bible. I’m still making all these mistakes in my Christian life. I’m still making unwise decisions... etc.”
 - Can you say this fear is well-intentioned?
- But what every Christian needs to understand is that God uses imperfect children to impact the world with the gospel and with His love. God does not expect perfection before you start serving: for perfection is impossible. The only perfect one is our Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - **He wants you to serve Him simply because you are His disciple.**
- And, there will be times you make mistakes in ministry, like the disciples did in verses 14-21. We all make mistakes, sin, and fail to walk by faith while serving in ministry.

Maybe some of you aren’t serving in ministry because you are afraid to fail others? Maybe some of you aren’t serving in ministry because you are afraid to fail the Lord?

Look at what the Apostle Paul told Timothy:

CSB: (2 Timothy 1:6 *Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.*)

Verses 27-33: Peter’s Confession of Christ

(Mark 8:27 *Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?”*

Mark 8:28 *So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”*

Mark 8:29 *He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”*

Mark 8:30 *Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.*

Mark 8:31 *And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*
Mark 8:32 *He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.*
Mark 8:33 *But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*)

The Testimony of Peter:

The Apostle Peter speaks for the Apostles after Jesus asked, "Men say this about me but who do you say I am?" Peter and the Apostles acknowledged and confessed that Jesus truly was the Christ, the Prophesied Messiah. And that is noteworthy! Matthew, recording the same event, exclusively highlights Jesus' direct response to Peter:

(Matthew 16:17 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah [Peter], for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.")*

Jesus made it absolutely clear that one does not confess Jesus as Christ, God-in-the-Flesh, **unless the Father reveals it to that person.**

This is one of the most amazing things about the gift of faith. We can't convince anyone to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. **It's the power of the gospel; God's grace to open the eyes of the blind; and the open heart of the sinner.** When we share the gospel, be encouraged that the response of the person, whether they receive it or reject it, is not based on you, how persuasive you are, or how effective you'd hope to be: **We are simply his witnesses. God alone saves.**

The response that caught my attention was...

The Rebuke of Peter:

Let me give some background information why Peter likely rebuked Christ. Quoting from John 6:14-15,

(John 6:14 *When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world."*

John 6:15 *Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.)*

The people only saw their Prophet, their Messiah, as fulfilling half of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. The common view in this day of the Messiah was: that the Messiah will establish His kingdom, that He will be King. The only prophecies that were anticipated to be fulfilled were the prophecies concerning Christ's millennial kingdom.

But what they clearly did not understand is that there were many more prophecies concerning Christ that needed to come before the prophecies concerning the coming kingdom. Christ's priesthood according to Melchizedek. Christ's sacrifice with the typologies of the sacrifices in the law of Moses. And most of all, Christ's death for the sins of humanity, ISAIAH 53!

It likely seems that this viewpoint of the Messiah also influenced the thinking of the Apostle Peter and the apostles.

That seems the most likely reason why the Apostle Peter rebuked Christ. He saw his Messiah as King on the Throne, not crucified on a Cross.

Whether the Apostle Peter was well-meaning or prideful, the scriptures don't clarify this. Anyways, over the years, this verse has always given me great perplexion.

Verse 33:

Also, it's crystal clear, not just from this verse but the rest of the scriptures, that we can be used by Satan, speak for Satan, and follow Satan after our profession of faith.

Sometimes, because God is not fulfilling our vision or our desires, we start to feed the thoughts and the lies of the enemy. This is not exclusive to the deity of Christ as it is in this context. Look at another context:

In 1 Timothy 5:11-15, years later at the time, older women who were becoming widows were making lifelong pledges, devoting themselves full-time to ministry and under unique qualifications, supported by the churches to serve full-time in ministry. It was a serious ministry that was gaining traction at this time.

The question obviously came up: what if a younger woman whose husband dies and who doesn't have children wants to give her lifelong pledge to serve Christ full-time in ministry as a widow till death?

Look at what the Apostle Paul said,

CSB: (1 Timothy 5:11 *But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when they are drawn away from Christ by desire, they want to marry*

1 Timothy 5:12 *and will therefore receive condemnation because they have renounced their original pledge.*

1 Timothy 5:13 *At the same time, they also learn to be idle, going from house to house; they are not only idle, but are also gossips and busybodies, saying things they shouldn't say.*

1 Timothy 5:14 *Therefore, I want younger women to marry, have children, manage their households, and give the adversary no opportunity to accuse us.*

1 Timothy 5:15 *For some have already turned away to follow Satan.*

1 Timothy 5:16 *If any believing woman has widows in her family, let her help them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it can help widows in genuine need.)*

The young widow may be very sincere, “I won’t remarry. I won’t have children. I’m going to serve Christ single, unmarried for the rest of my life.” The Apostle Paul said it’s dangerous to make pledges like that because one day, you might actually want to remarry and have children. And when you have that new vision for your life, and you don’t see God fulfilling that vision, you don’t see any potential husband at church, and you feel stuck because everyone in the church considers you to be the widow-for-life because you made that profession, what happens?

You will start to listen to the lies of Satan that God is not fulfilling your new vision for life, the vision of remarriage and starting a family. Satan’s voice yelling in your ears that you are stuck and you will never be happy. And the only way to leave is to follow after Satan, abandoning the ministry, abandoning church, abandoning the fellowship of the saints, and ultimately abandoning Christ. That’s why the Apostle Paul gave us this word to avoid this. My objective with that example was to reveal to you this:

To be used by Satan, to speak for Satan, and to follow Satan after our profession of faith is not something exclusive to Peter and Christ’s deity. It is pervasive to **all of life**.

(Graphic 5)



Principle #5: Believe and seek God’s word for God’s plan.

- When things aren't going our way, whether it be like Peter's view of what Jesus should be doing; or the unmarried widow's new vision of what her life should be like, we need to be very cautious what voices we are listening to. Are you listening to the lies of Satan in your own head or through the voices of others? Or, are you listening to God's voice?

Where is God's voice found? The scriptures. Seek God's word first for God's plan.

Verses 34-38: Cost of Discipleship

(Mark 8:34 *When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

Mark 8:35 *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.*

Mark 8:36 *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*

Mark 8:37 *Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Mark 8:38 *For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.")*

The last and final principle of discipleship for this study in Mark 8 is,

(Graphic 6)



Principle #6: Surrender to Christ and follow Christ.

- No matter the sacrifice, no matter the shame, and no matter the difficulty.

Many have considered this to be the primary passage to define true Christian discipleship. You can't have discipleship unless you have verses 34-38.

To be Christ's disciple requires:

- (1). Sacrifice
- (2). Shame
- (3). Difficulty

This is the **cost of discipleship**.

Many of you have sacrificed much to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. To God be the glory!

Now, let me share with you a final verse on **the crown of discipleship**:

(Matthew 19:29) *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.)*

(Graphic 7)

Principles #1-3

- (1). Natural obstacles train us to walk by faith.
- (2). Follow God's methods.
- (3). A heart of faith is the only way to spiritually grow and thrive.

Principles #4-6

- (4). Jesus wants us to learn from Him and serve Him even while we are still growing.
- (5). Believe and seek God's word for God's plan.
- (6). Surrender to Christ and follow Christ.

I praise God that many of us have surrendered wholeheartedly to Christ. We have been following Christ now for some time. And along the way, the Lord is still teaching us how to follow Him well! And in the end, we will be crowned with unspeakable glory!