

SCRIPTURES OF THE DISCIPLES IN ACTION

The disciples are the close circle of Jesus hand-picked followers that He was training to believe what He believed and to do the works that He did which included the 'children's bread' - healing and deliverance.¹ The Holy Spirit recorded occasions which demonstrate both their success and their failure while they were still 'babes in Christ.' This is certainly intended to be an encouragement to us: We too are disciples, hand-picked by Jesus and we too experience failure along with success. May we learn from both.

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' Luke 10:17 ESV



Lessons the Disciples Can Teach Us

The disciples who walked with Jesus during His three years of ministry were given authority by Him to heal 'every disease and affliction' and to cast out spirits. But they were not always successful as their failure to liberate the demonized boy demonstrated. We can draw some encouraging insights from these two glimpses into this seldom recorded aspect of the disciple's lives:

1) Saving Faith Is Not Required

Not a single one of these first disciples were born again or had 'saving faith' at this point in their lives, yet they were still empowered by Jesus to pray for healing and deliverance. Apparently, Jesus is so willing to heal people that He will work through the prayers of anyone who is willing, even if they have a still undeveloped faith relationship with God.

2) Moral Perfection Is Not Required

Even Judas, who later betrayed Jesus, was among those who were sent out working miracles. Moral character is always desirable, but apparently perfection is not necessary for being a vessel of God to heal and liberated others. I note this not to promote apostasy, but to counter the enemy's accusations that you may not be 'mature' or 'worthy' enough to be used by God. Don't wait for moral perfection to arrive before you set out to be used of God.

3) Steady Success Is Not Required

We are shown that even the disciples who walked with Jesus and who would become the mighty apostles of the early church, nevertheless, experienced failure and perplexity all along the way. That should encourage us to keep trying to be used and seeking to learn the ropes.



4) Being 'Somebody Special' Is Not Required

Jesus entrusted the healing ministry to untried new recruits that He had just invited to walk with Him. These were ordinary people like all of us. They only became extraordinary long after they began following Jesus and seeking to be of service to Him. Jesus seems to love to release people into ministry, even if it means that they will get in over their heads at times.

Three Instructive Episodes

We don't see the disciples in action nearly as much as we see Jesus. Naturally enough, the main message of the New Testament is about the Lord and, even there, the gospels don't give us nearly as much about Him as we would like to have. Nevertheless, a loving Father has given us all we really need to get us up and running.

1. The Sending of the Twelve

At the end of Matthew Chapter 9 Jesus made His famous declaration about how ready the world was for harvesting and good it would be for people to pray for laborers to be sent forth to do that work. Evidently, He prayed. Did the disciples? It takes a lot of faith-courage to do town to town evangelism, especially when it's never been done before. By anyone. Jesus doesn't hesitate to send them out. Notice that He didn't call for volunteers. It's best in the healing ministry as in any other, to seek to stay under The Mercy and under The Obedience. This simplifies matters immensely. Notice, too, that He didn't give them very much in the way of training. They are to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons." But how? No manual has ever been found that carries that part of the instruction. Be assured of this: Reliance upon the Holy Spirit, compassion for the ones in need, and faith-boldness count for far more than head knowledge. Jesus has given us authority just as He gave it to them. What He can't give us is their pluck and courage. We will have to grow that ourselves with His help!

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Matthew 10:1-9 ESV



2. The Sending of the Seventy-two

These seventy-two “others” are not even a part of the inner circle of the twelve disciples we usually think about. We don’t even know their names. They form a kind of second wave for the healing revival Jesus is releasing. Or perhaps, a second string. Presumably, they have had even less training than the twelve. Those happy few were privileged to walk within ear shot of Jesus and could crowd around Him at the campfire to get the inside scoop on how He did what He did. Not so for these “others.” The seventy-two would likely have felt somewhat on the outside looking in, watching Jesus and His chosen twelve from a distance. Nevertheless, these obstacles – which seem large enough to us – didn’t cause them to stumble. They plunged into their assignment without hesitation and returned triumphantly. How would you like to have Jesus rejoicing over your efforts? May we learn from this that it doesn’t matter what we seem to have going for us or going against us. It only matters that we embrace the faith-adventure Jesus sets before us.

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest... The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.
Luke 10:1-2, 17-21 ESV

3. Disciples Unable to Heal a Demonized Boy

Even the best trained disciples can have an off day. Remember, these disciples are that core group Jesus was personally training. You can’t get a better Instructor than that. Yet, they still failed to accomplish this healing. Apparently, Jesus expected that they could. Hearing their Master’s disappointment expressed so sharply and publicly must have been hard for them to bear. It even seems out of Character. This is the One of whom it is written that there is no condemnation in Him for those who are being redeemed by Him.²

If this passage is of concern to you, I want to say that Jesus has had plenty to be upset with me about over the years, yet I have never known Him to express even the slightest frustration with my bumbling efforts. So, be encouraged. Besides, everything in a rebuke depends upon the tone of voice and the eye contact. I can’t help but believe that there is a wink in here that we can’t see. Even so, the message should be clear that the problem



with healing is never God's lack of willingness or ability, but our "faithless and twisted" ways. Now, that's something we can all work on.

And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.' And Jesus answered, 'O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.' And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' He said to them, 'Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.' Matthew 17:14-20 ESV

Next Healing Essential

[Scriptures of the Apostles in Action](#) After the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus His close followers are no longer called disciples. They have become the apostles, the 'sent ones' who are now fully commissioned to carry on in the Lord's absence the work He trained them to do: preach the good news and heal the sick. To their number others have been added, most notably Paul of Tarsus. The Church is launched with signs and wonders; so is its healing ministry.

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Scriptures and Footnotes

¹ In His conversation with a non-Jewish woman who was seeking healing for her daughter, Jesus called the ministry of demonic deliverance 'the children's bread.' Children's bread indicates that healing and deliverance are not only for the 'children' of the covenant, but also that such supernatural working is meant to be as commonplace and life-giving as our daily bread: And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.' But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she is crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' And he answered, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' Matthew 15:22-25 ESV

² There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1 ESV



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