



The Mutual Ministry of Women and Men

Part 1: Our Shared Priesthood in Christ

The First Five Sessions of a Fifteen-Chapter Bible Study

written by
The Rev. Dr. Steven E. King



• A Resource in the Sola Discipleship Series •

Structure and Contents of the Series

This series, *The Mutual Ministry of Women and Men*, was written as a fifteen-session Bible study, broken down into three parts of five sessions each. The three parts are as follows:

Part 1: Our Shared Priesthood in Christ

This part focuses on what it means to be an ambassador of Christ and our particular calling to speak his words of grace and forgiveness to one another in Christ's name.

- Session 1) All the Disciples of Jesus
Our Common Calling as Followers of Christ
- Session 2) Ambassadors for Christ
God's Command to Speak on His Behalf
- Session 3) The Authority of Christ Himself
Handing on the Word We Have Received
- Session 4) The Priesthood of All Believers
Ministry of the Whole People of God in Christ
- Session 5) Standing in for Christ or for the Church?
Executors of God's Will and Testament

Part 2: Men and Women in Service Together

This part focuses on our nature as women and men through the biblical stories of Creation, Fall, and Redemption and how our new creation in Christ informs how we serve God and our neighbors.

- Session 6) The Order of Creation
The Complementarity of Spiritual Gifts
- Session 7) The Disorder of the Fall
Hierarchy Posing as Complementarity
- Session 8) The New Order of Redemption
In Christ there is a New Creation
- Session 9) Mutual Submission and Service
The Shared Servanthood of Male and Female
- Session 10) Equipped for Every Good Work
Honoring the Gifts God Has Given Us

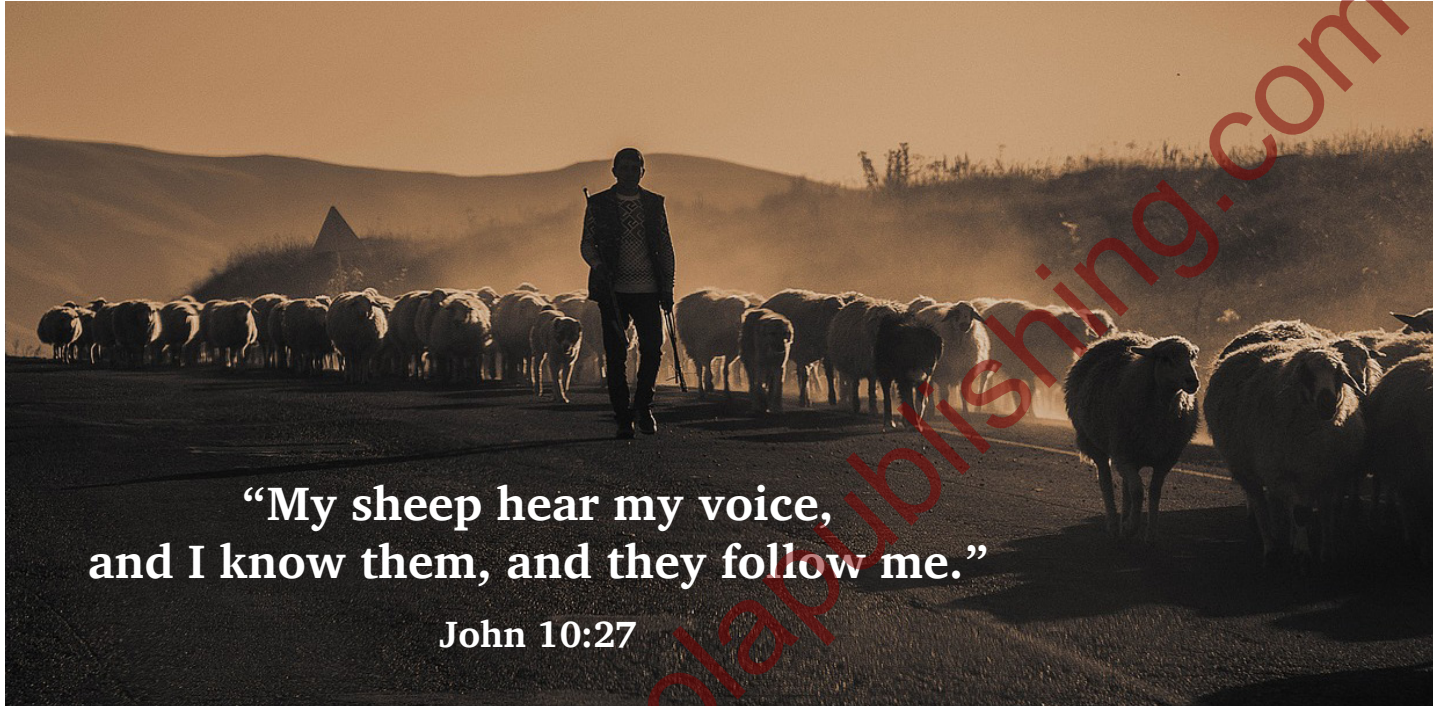
Part 3: Called to Leadership in the Church

This part focuses on issues related to the participation of men and women in professional ministry and leadership in the Church, looking at biblical examples and advice for the Church today.

- Session 11) On Behalf of the Body
An Ordered and Accountable Public Ministry
- Session 12) For the Sake of Good Order
Making Sure the Gospel Will Be Heard
- Session 13) What We Proclaim is not Ourselves
Ministry Under the Authority of Christ Alone
- Session 14) What You have Heard and Seen in Me
Paul's Own Example of Servant Leadership
- Session 15) Workers in the Harvest
Walking Together in Service to Christ

SESSION 1

All the Disciples of Jesus Our Common Calling as Followers of Christ



**“My sheep hear my voice,
and I know them, and they follow me.”**

John 10:27

Dialog: Psalm 119:33-35

- L: Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes;
C: and I will keep it to the end.
L: Give me understanding,
C: that I may keep your law and observe it
with my whole heart.
L: Lead me in the path of your command-
ments, for I delight in it.

Opening Prayer

O God, our Father, you are the source of our life and faith. We thank you for all the many blessings we have received as your children and for the honor of being called to your service. Train us to be true disciples of Christ, following in his footsteps and participating in his work on behalf of the world. By your Holy Spirit, give us the faith to entrust our lives to your care, for we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, our Master, who has called us to take up our cross and follow him. Amen.

Following Our Shepherd

The biblical image of sheep following their shepherd is one that appears throughout the Scriptures to represent our relationship with God and what it means to be his followers. As believers, we confess the same truth spoken by the writer of the 23rd Psalm, “The Lord is my Shepherd ... he leads me.”

Knowing that we are the sheep and he is the Shepherd is a not-so-subtle reminder of who is in charge. Sheep are not known for their leadership abilities. Neither are they known for their intellect or mastery of deep existential questions. Sheep follow. Sheep are led. As Jesus said to his first disciples:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:27-28)

In this relationship we have with the Good Shepherd, we see that *hearing*, *knowing*, and *following* are all part of being a disciple. Jesus makes it clear that his voice — his Word — is what creates and nurtures the trust and faith we have in him. It is by this same Word that we have the promise of eternal life in him and a future that is held securely in his hands. Indeed, as Paul says, “Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). This is why all who are disciples of Christ are called to listen and learn, for it is only in his Word that we have our faith and life.

Definition: Disciple (noun)

= a learner who follows a master's teaching

Latin: discipulus, Greek: mathétēs

= one who learns: a student, trainee, or apprentice

Read the Bible: Matthew 12:46-50

"Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven ..."

In biblical times, students often trained under a master by serving as apprentices. These students, or disciples, not only learned by *listening* to their master's instruction but also by *participating* in the work of the master, putting his words into practice. As Jesus told those who followed and believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31).

This story illustrates the importance of the Word in our relationship to our Master, and it also shows that the full number of Jesus' disciples included more than just the Twelve.

- 1.1 When Jesus' mother Mary and his brothers came from Nazareth to see him, what was he doing at the time? Why do you think they were concerned about him? Why could they not get to him? (Compare: **Mark 3:20-21, 31-35.**)
- 1.2 When Jesus spoke of his true family, what word does Scripture use to refer to the ones to whom Jesus gestured and spread out his hand (Matthew 12:49)? What evidence do you see in the text that this group included both men and women?
- 1.3 Read **John 10:27-30**. In these verses, how does Jesus describe the relationship between his followers and himself? What promise does he make to us?
- 1.4 What parable did Jesus tell in **Matthew 7:24-27**? How would you summarize his basic point? To be a faithful disciple, why must *hearing* and *doing* go together?
- 1.5 Read the two quotes from Luther's Small Catechism at right. What means does God use to turn us into people of faith? What is God's purpose and end-goal in making us his disciples?

Read: Luke 10:38-42

Mary sat listening to Jesus' teaching

In ancient days, to "sit at a master's feet" was an expression used to refer to an accepted student of a rabbi or teacher. This brief story illustrates how listening to the word of Jesus is central to what it means to be his disciple. Considering all the other things she could have been doing, Jesus said, "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (v. 42).

- a) What did Martha think her sister should be doing? Why do you think she felt that way? What tone do you hear in her voice?
- b) What traditional roles are being challenged in this story? Is Jesus obliged to operate according to our expectations?
- c) How does this story demonstrate what it means to be a disciple of Jesus? How does it also show that *all* of Jesus' followers are called to a life of discipleship in the Word?

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live a godly life now and in eternity...

He has done all this in order that I might be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns for all eternity. This is most certainly true!

— Martin Luther's Small Catechism

Who Were 'Disciples' in Scripture?

In casual terms, when people speak of Jesus' disciples, we often think of the twelve men that Jesus set apart for specific service during his earthly ministry (Mark 3:13-19). Indeed, these men were some of the first students who learned from Jesus.

In Scripture, however, the term "disciple" is not limited only to the group referred to as "The Twelve" (Greek: *dodeka*). Throughout his travels, there were many more people who followed Jesus in addition to those numbered among the Twelve. These included both men and women (see Acts 1:21-22, Luke 8:1-3).

Distinct from the local "crowds" (Greek: *ochlos*) who came to see Jesus when he arrived in a particular place, there was a much larger group of "disciples" (Greek: *mathétēs*) who journeyed with Jesus in his travels and learned from him. For example, note the distinction made in Luke 6:17 between the "great crowd of his disciples" who followed Jesus and the "great multitude of people" who came from the local area.

Often, Jesus taught things to this larger group of disciples that he did not reveal to the crowds outside (see Mark 4:10-11). As insiders to his ministry, this large group of disciples was also sent out under the Lord's power and authority. For example, in Luke 10, Jesus sent out 70 disciples to do his work just as he had previously done with the Twelve.

a) Some people say that women must be excluded from ministry leadership in the Church on the basis that "Jesus only chose men to be his disciples." Why is it important to remember that Jesus' original disciples included many more than just the Twelve?

b) Read **Mark 3:7-9** and **Luke 8:42-46**, making note of how the Twelve functioned in regard to the crowd. Could there be some very practical reasons that Jesus chose twelve strong men to surround him as he traveled?

Faith is Expressed in Words

Scripture shows us how God makes us believers by means of his Word, through which the Spirit works to create trust and faith in Christ as our Lord and Savior. This faith is expressed in our witness to Jesus, as we share the promise of his Gospel Word with others. Scripture says:

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved ...

"But how will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? How are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Romans 10:8-9, 14-15)

As an example of disciples in Scripture who were asked by the Lord to bear witness to what they believed, look up the faith confessions of the two Christians below and compare the similarities:

- ❖ **Read Matthew 16:11-17** The testimony of Simon Peter
- ❖ **Read John 11:17-27** The testimony of Martha of Bethany

- 1.6 What title(s) do these two believers use to identify who Jesus is? In what way were these two faith statements personal expressions of trust in Jesus?
- 1.7 Whose question prompted the confession of faith made by these two disciples? Would you say the fact that one of these disciples was male and the other female determined the content, sincerity, or depth of their faith?
- 1.8 Are you bold enough to say that you are a true disciple of Jesus? Why or why not?



Jesus said: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master." (Matthew 10:24-25a)

Read the Bible: Luke 24:36-48

Jesus opened their minds "You are my witnesses of these things."

This passage is Luke's description of what took place when Jesus appeared after his resurrection to the whole group of disciples. It includes Luke's account of the commission Jesus gave to his disciples that they "proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations" (v. 47). The whole fellowship of disciples, both men and women, were sent out to bear witness to Jesus and what he had done.

- 1.9 Go back a few verses prior and read Luke 24:33. Judas had betrayed Jesus by this point and was out of the picture. Who does Scripture say was gathered together and present in this time and place? Were Jesus' words here spoken only to the Twelve? What does that tell us?
- 1.10 What did Jesus "open their minds to understand"? Was this something different from what he had been teaching his disciples all along? What was different now?
- 1.11 In verse 46, what specific thing did Jesus tell his followers he would do for them? In verse 47, what did Jesus tell his followers that he wanted them to do? In what way are these two verses directly connected to one another?
- 1.12 To whom was Jesus speaking in verses 48-49? What exactly is the purpose and function of a witness? Can witnesses do their job without speaking? By what authority would the disciples be empowered to bear witness?
- 1.13 Which do you think better describes what Jesus is saying here: that men and women who follow him are *allowed* to declare the forgiveness of sins in his name, or that they are *commanded* and *sent* to do so?

Summary of Key Biblical Points from this Session

- 1) Disciples of Jesus are men and women who follow and learn from their Master, Christ himself (Matthew 11:29).
- 2) By the power of the Holy Spirit, God himself creates faith in those who hear the saving message of Christ (Romans 10:17).
- 3) Christian faith is a genuine trust and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, given to us by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- 4) Being a disciple of Christ is an ongoing relationship with our Master throughout our lives. We never stop learning and growing in faith, love, and obedience (2 Thessalonians 1:13).
- 4) Followers of Jesus are expected by their Lord to bear witness to the faith they have been given (1 Peter 3:15).



Closing Prayer

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.

Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that your hand is leading us and your love is supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Holden Prayer of Good Courage
(Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 153)*