

“Disciples Are...”  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
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“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”  
(Matthew 10:16-20)

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Pastor Wally spoke of the time I spend in prayer and pointed out that Jesus had prayed all night in Luke 6:12 before selecting his 12 apostles. “Quality time” is defined as “time spent giving all of one's attention to someone who is close (such as one's child)” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and has become a recurring excuse for folks who are living busy lives that they make up for the lack of “quantity” time spent with their children with “quality” time. Does this attitude describe my prayer-life, that I make up for “quantity” prayer time with a much lesser amount of “quality” prayer time? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Does God see my prayer time as “quality” time spent with Him? Explain.

Am I a disciple of Jesus? (See John 8:31) If so, why? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally pointed out that disciples are to be courageous, but that we've become “soft” (think the lion in the “Wizard of Oz” – “What makes the muskrat guard his musk? Courage.”) when it comes to sharing the Gospel message with others. C.H. Spurgeon said, “If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.” Do these statements describe me? Explain.

Or is it that in some way(s) I've become lazy (and soft?) when it comes to sharing the Gospel message with others? Explain.

C.H. Spurgeon pointed out in his August 19, 1877 sermon: “First, let us consider THEIR PROMINENT VOCATION. They had other callings, for some of them were fishermen; but their great calling was this — “Behold, I send you forth.” The call of the Lord over-rides all other vocations. Every child of God, according to the capacity of grace which God has given to him, should hear this voice of the Lord calling him and sending him forth to labour— “Behold, I send you forth.” What is my “prominent vocation”? Does “the call of the Lord over-ride[ ] all other vocations” in my life? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Jesus tells me that I’m to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16) John Piper explains it this way: “But, even though sheep are proverbially stupid—which, on the face of it, is what it looks like when they walk toward wolves and not away from them— Jesus counters that notion by saying “be wise as serpents.” So vulnerability, not stupidity, is the point of calling us sheep. Be like snakes, not sheep, when it comes to being smart. I take that to mean that snakes are quick to get out of the way. They go under rock.” [Serpents blend into the environment when they move into a new territory. Rather than announce their presence, they lay low, stay quiet, and blend into their surroundings. Most snakes have the ability to be nearly invisible because they were designed to be camouflaged.] “So, yes, go among wolves and be vulnerable as you preach the gospel, but when they lunge at you, step aside. When they open their mouths, don’t jump in. And not only that, be as innocent as doves. That is, don’t give them any legitimate reason to accuse you of injustice or immorality. Keep your reputation as clean as you can.” Pastor Wally said that I need to think like the world thinks, but not react as the world reacts. John Piper asked the question “This brings us to the dilemma that has faced many faithful witnesses: When do you flee from danger? And when do you embrace it and witness through it?” And, what do I say???

In 1684, John Bunyan published a book called “Seasonable Counsels, or Advice to Sufferers.” In it, he addressed this question: When does a sufferer fly (from danger) and when does he stand (and suffer the danger)? Bunyan knew how to answer for himself. He had four children, one of them blind, and he chose to remain in prison for twelve years rather than promise not to preach the gospel. How does he answer the question for others? May we try to escape? “Thou mayest do in this as it is in thy heart. If it is in thy heart to fly, fly; if it be in thy heart to stand, stand. Anything but a denial of the truth. He that flies, has warrant to do so; he that stands, has warrant to do so. Yea, the same man may both fly and stand, as the call and working of God with his heart may be. Moses fled, Ex. 2:15; Moses stood, Heb. 11:27. David fled, 1 Sam. 19:12; David stood, 1 Sam. 24:8. Jeremiah fled, Jer. 37:11-12; Jeremiah stood, Jer. 38:17. Christ withdrew himself, Luke 19:10; Christ stood, John 18:1-8. Paul fled, 2 Cor. 11:33; Paul stood, Act 20:22-23.” How do I develop the wisdom “as serpents” needed to be able to know when to flee and when to stand? Is it even possible to develop such wisdom? Explain.

Pastor Wally pointed out that disciples are cautious (“watchful; careful to avoid evils; attentive to examine probable effects and consequences of measures, with a view to avoid danger or misfortune; prudent; circumspect. – Webster, 1828). Jesus told the disciples to “beware” (“Literally, to restrain or guard one’s self from. Hence, to regard with caution; to restrain one’s self from anything that may be dangerous, injurious or improper; to avoid; to take care; followed by of before the thing that is to be avoided.” Ibid.) How well do I “restrain [my]self from anything that may be...injurious or improper”? Explain.

Pastor Wally pointed out lastly that disciples are confident because we have a noble message. C.H. Spurgeon in his August 19, 1877 sermon also pointed out: “Next, “I [Jesus] send you”— I who prize you, for you are my sheep, I who love you, for I bought you with my blood; I, who would not expose you to a needless danger, I who know by my infinite wisdom that I am doing a wise and a kind thing, I send you, you my sheep, my dear sheep, for whom I laid down my life,— I send you into the midst of wolves, therefore you may safely go, for I who love you send you there. Lord, we ask no questions, but we go at once.” Has my understanding of who it is that is sending me actually impact the level of my confidence to declare His good news to a lost world and why?

When God was summoning Moses to go to Pharaoh and convince him to release His people, Moses had an excuse for God at every turn (Exodus 4:10-15) Isaiah, on the other hand, when God was calling him, responded, “Here am I! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:8b) Am I more like Moses, more like Isaiah, or somewhere in the middle? Explain.

Pastor Wally concluded his message reminding me that God’s got my back (“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:19-20)” C.H. Spurgeon concluded his August 19, 1877 sermon by saying: “Do you hear the Lord sending you out to work? Then, I entreat you, go forth. Suppose I make that one sentence my last word,— go forth. You may have heard of the Scotch officer who had his men drawn up for the battle, and felt bound to make them a speech, and so he pointed to the enemy, and said, “There they are, lads; if you don’t kill them, they will kill you.” My word is the same: there are the enemies of all righteousness, the enemies of Christ, the enemies of the good of men, the enemies of progress: if you do not overthrow them by publishing the gospel to all according to your ability, they will overthrow you. Which is it to be? By the grace of the Eternal and the omnipotence of him who bled for us, we will conquer even by his cross after his own fashion. Only let his Holy Spirit rest upon us. Amen.” So, knowing that God’s got my back; will I “go forth”? Explain.