

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

Having left Galilee, Jesus and his disciples are heading for Jerusalem. The disciples, at least at some level, have come to an understanding of who Jesus is. What they haven't figured out is the answer to the question of what that means. By the end of their time in Jerusalem they will know, but for now Jesus begins his teaching on discipleship with the reminder of the shape of the ministry of the Messiah. The mistake of the disciples is not that they don't understand what Jesus is talking about (although they obviously don't), but that they don't ask him to explain. Was it a pride-spawned fear of being seen as dumb in the eyes of the other disciples or Jesus? Or, was it an avoidance-bred fear of not really wanting to know what it meant? The silence of the Gospel in this matter allows the reader to insert any form of fear.

Let's face it; there are many passages of Scripture that we just do not understand. If it were not so, then why do we have so many commentaries, sermons, Bible study guides and study Bibles at our disposal? The problem with all these great resources is that they should merely be supplementary, and not our primary source of understanding. Discipleship is a relationship with a master. We can think of discipleship as an apprenticeship for living. If you were apprenticed to Joe the blacksmith to learn the trade, you would spend your time with Joe, watching and imitating everything he did. You wouldn't hesitate to ask him questions because that is the purpose of your relationship. In contrast, you would not go to farmer John who just had his horse shod, and ask him how Joe shod John's horse. He might be a source of evaluation of his experience with Joe's work, but not a primary resource for understanding the work.

Like an apprenticeship, discipleship is a personal relationship with the master. To pretend that we know something we do not know, or not to express our lack of understanding to the Master, is dishonest. Our first response needs to be to turn directly to Jesus and ask the question, "What does this mean?" Jesus is our primary resource and we access him through prayer. He, through the Holy Spirit, will direct us to the answer, and that is where the commentaries, sermons, Bible studies guides and study Bibles, as well as our fellow disciples in the church, come into play. The disciples did not know because they did not ask. Go to Jesus first and he will show you the way.

Lord Christ, enlighten me along the path of my obedience to you. Give me the courage and the willingness to ask the questions that arise along the way. Help me not to see any question as too trivial to pursue the answer. Allow me to see my questions as proddings from the Spirit in areas where clarification will be needed further down the path. Then, in my weakness, compel me to ask. Amen.