

Chapter 13: Discipleship

McKenzie stood on the front porch of Sally Tolbert's cape cod-style house in Simsbury and knocked on the door.

A moment later, the deadbolt clicked, the door creaked open, and Sally appeared. She was wearing an orange-pleated midi skirt with a white blouse. Hardly the outfit she expected a busy mom with three young children and two on the way to wear, but it signaled their meeting must be important. McKenzie marveled at Sally's smooth black skin, sassy-short curly black hair, and contagious smile.

"Hi, McKenzie! Right on time. I like that. Welcome again to our home." Sally pointed to the porch floor. "How do you like our new welcome mat?"

McKenzie glanced down. "Very fancy. Coir fiber, isn't it? And monogrammed with a 'T' for Tolbert, no less. Very nice indeed."

"Thanks. Come on in." Sally reached out and hugged McKenzie as she stepped over the threshold.

McKenzie leaned back from Sally's embrace and clasped her hands in Sally's. "Thanks again for calling and for being willing to disciple me."

"A promise made is a promise kept. Let's go into the kitchen."

Sally moved over to the stove and lifted a copper kettle. "Would you like some tea?"

"Yes, please. How are you feeling?"

"My last checkup went well, and the twins are baking just fine in mama's oven."

McKenzie couldn't help but chuckle.

Sally brought over a white porcelain jar containing an assortment of teas, along with two matching black mugs, and placed them on the rectangular oak table. McKenzie sat in one of the chairs with a view out the bay window into the backyard. The trampoline was set up in the rear near the woods, just as she'd remembered.

Sally filled McKenzie's cup with hot water. "How have you been doing since Jackson left us?"

Sally's directness was more than McKenzie could handle, so she burst into tears.

Sally put her hand on McKenzie's shoulder.

"It's been awful. I miss him so much. Our wedding day was the greatest day of my life. I couldn't have been happier. Then at the reception, the man I hated more than anyone in the world, Dexter, was shot and killed by Mike. The next morning, the man I loved more than anyone in the world, Jackson, was shot and killed by Ronaldo. It's been a real rollercoaster of a month, Sally. If I didn't have Jesus, I'd be in an insane asylum or dead right now."

Sally shook her head. "I don't know how you're doing it."

"It's not me. It's Christ living in me."

"Amen. You're very wise."

McKenzie scoffed. "Thank you, but the truth is I've only been a Christian for three months. I hardly know anything. I've read the Bible, but there is still so much I don't know. Will you please teach me?"

"Of course, McKenzie. That's why we're here today."

Sally handed her a small booklet and a pen. "We're going to review the gospel of John together for the next fourteen weeks, assuming the babies don't pop first. Here are the materials you'll need."

McKenzie was a little taken aback by Sally's authoritative tone but made herself smile, knowing she meant well.

"You'll follow the plan in the booklet, reading passages five days per week. For each day, you'll record your thoughts in the booklet using the STAR method."

"The STAR method?"

"Yes. It's an acrostic.

- Scripture reference
- Thought conveyed (what the passage means to you)
- Application made (how it applies to you; what God is saying to you personally)
- Response (what I am telling God about what I'll do with this information).

"We'll meet once a week to review your thoughts and answer any questions you may have."

McKenzie took a sip of her tea. "Sounds good."

Sally held up another booklet. "Sometime after that, we'll work through another discipleship study together. It's thirteen weeks long. There's a different topic for each week. You'll memorize a key passage of scripture, write answers to various questions about related scripture passages in the booklet, then review your memory verse and responses with me at the end of each week. How does that sound?"

"Great! But why are we going through *two* discipleship programs together?"

Sally sat up straight. "The first study focuses on strengthening your personal relationship with Jesus, while the second focuses on gaining knowledge of him through his Word . . . My goal is not to fill your head with Bible knowledge, although that's important. My primary

purpose is to get you close to God. Eventually, the Holy Spirit will fill you and radiate out of you, causing others to want to know Jesus too.”

“That sounds wonderful, Sally. I can’t wait to get started. I want to know Jesus and understand every verse in the Bible. I also want to do everything I can to serve him while I’m still on earth.”

“Fantastic! I’m looking forward to helping you along your journey. Does this time and day of the week work for you?”

“Wednesdays at 10:00 AM are perfect. I guess it works for you too since the kids are in school.”

Sally nodded. “Exactly. We’ll start with the gospel of John next week.”

“Sounds like a plan.” McKenzie shrugged. “What should we talk about now?”

“Anything you like.”

McKenzie shifted in her seat. “Okay. One thing still bothers me. I discussed it with Jackson, and he gave me a book to read about it, but I still have questions.”

“What’s the subject?”

“Evolution.”

Sally smiled. “That’s right up my alley, McKenzie. I was a biology major and took a few geology courses in college, so I’m very familiar with it.”

“Great!”

Sally reached across the table, took McKenzie’s hands into hers, and peered into her eyes. “I know this is really hard for you because, like everyone else, you’ve been taught your whole life – during elementary school, middle school, high school, and college, and bombarded

with it daily by the media – that there is no God and we all got here by accident through evolution.”

“Right.”

“Well, let’s start at the beginning. Proponents of evolution believe that over long periods of time, fish, wherever they came from, turned into amphibians, amphibians turned into reptiles, and reptiles turned into birds and mammals through random, fortuitous increases in genetic information.

“DNA, otherwise known as deoxyribonucleic acid, is the molecule that passes genetic information from parent to child. At conception, the father contributes 23 chromosomes through the sperm, while the mother contributes 23 chromosomes from the egg. Chromosomes from both parents combine to create a unique combination of DNA. Hundreds of genes within each chromosome contain the blueprint for the development of the child.

“DNA is vastly more complex and compact than any computer chip. The amount of information contained in one-square-inch of DNA is equivalent to the information contained in seven billion Bibles.

“Human DNA contains three billion base pairs made up of two strands which form a double-helix. DNA information is passed to RNA, which uses this information to create proteins. Proteins are made up of amino acids. DNA codes, called nucleotides, contain specific, ordered instructions for making amino acids.”

McKenzie flexed her arms over her head. “Is it okay if I don’t understand all that? I mean, I was an English major in college and didn’t do too well in high school biology.”

Sally nodded. “Sure. Here’s the bottom line. For a fish to grow legs, specific DNA instructions would have to be provided. For an amphibian to grow reptilian scales, specific DNA

instructions would have to be provided. For a reptile to grow feathers, specific DNA instructions would have to be provided. For an apelike mammal to evolve into a human, specific DNA instructions would have to be provided.

“Evolutionists would have you believe this happened by accident, through chance mutations, which are errors that occur while genetic information is being transferred during reproduction. The problem with this argument is that virtually all genetic mutations result in a loss or reorganizing of information; mutations don’t add the information required to modify creatures from one kind to another.

“No scientific observation has ever demonstrated how DNA molecules originated from lifeless chemicals and organized themselves into a highly sophisticated single cell, let alone a living human being with a free will, a conscience, and a capacity for loving others.

“The human body is enormously complex. It contains sixty trillion cells, all organized into systems and organs that perform specific functions in perfect harmony. The human body includes twenty-five thousand miles of capillaries, twenty to thirty trillion red blood cells that transport oxygen throughout the body, one-hundred billion white blood cells that fight invaders, eyes and ears more complex than anything ever created by humanity, and a brain with one-hundred trillion connections.

“There are many other arguments against evolution, but the challenges regarding the increase of genetic information required to create new kinds is, in my opinion, the strongest.”

McKenzie sipped her tea. “Wow! You really know your stuff, Sally. That was a compelling argument.”

Sally smiled. “Thanks, McKenzie. I’ve done a lot of reading about this over the years. You can too if you like.”

“Maybe someday. As I said, science isn’t my forte.”

Sally chuckled. “That’s okay. I have some books by Ken Ham that are easy to understand. You can borrow them if you wish.”

McKenzie shrugged. “Isn’t he the guy who believes the earth is six-thousand years old and is planning to build a life-size replica of Noah’s Ark in Kentucky?”

“Yes, that’s him.”

McKenzie placed her hand on her chin. “Hmm. I believe Jesus died on the cross to save me from my sins and that the Bible is the Word of God, but I’m not sure the earth is so young, that there was a worldwide Flood, and that only Noah and his family survived it.”

Sally got up and added more hot water to her tea. “The age of the earth and the Flood are two other huge topics, McKenzie. Many books have been written about them, and there are a variety of opinions.”

McKenzie looked off to the side. “Jackson discussed them with me during lunch one day. I remember we were sitting in the cafeteria at work. I don’t remember all the details, but he said some Christians believe the earth is old, and some believe it is young.”

Sally returned to her seat. “That’s correct, McKenzie. Some Christians believe the earth was created in six solar days as it says in Genesis 1, Exodus 20, and Exodus 31. Others believe the “days” mentioned in Genesis 1 were actually long periods of time because the Hebrew word *Yom*, mentioned there and in Psalm 90, can be interpreted that way. Still, others believe there was a long gap in time, possibly millions of years, between the time the shell of the earth existed, as noted in Genesis 1:2, and when God began the creation process, as noted in Genesis 1:3.

There are many other theories, but they basically center around two types: A young-earth, six- to

ten-thousand years old, based on a literal interpretation of the Bible, and an old-earth, meant to align with the findings of modern science.

“One of the first things to consider when discussing this topic is that none of us were there at the time of creation. Secularists and creationists look at the same physical evidence and reach very different conclusions. Why is that?”

McKenzie paused. “I guess it’s because creationists believe the Bible is true and secularists don’t.”

“That’s the right idea. Each side looks at the evidence starting with a different set of assumptions. Secularists don’t believe there was a catastrophic worldwide flood as recorded in the Bible, so they conclude changes to the earth’s crust must have occurred gradually, at the same rate as they do today. They presume the earth, and therefore the universe, must be billions of years old.

“What persuaded me that the Flood actually occurred and that the earth is young is that Jesus said the whole Old Testament is true.”

“He did? Where does it say that?”

“In John 10:35. Jesus said, ‘... the Scripture cannot be broken ...’ He was, therefore, testifying to the full authenticity and accuracy of the Old Testament.”

McKenzie had to give herself a moment to process this information. All she could do was huff.

“Jesus specifically mentioned Noah and the Flood in Matthew 24.”

McKenzie sipped her tea. “He did? I must have skimmed over that.”

“Noah is also mentioned in Hebrews 11 and by the apostle Peter in his writings.”

McKenzie nodded her head. “Thanks for pointing that out but wouldn’t a secularist say that’s circular reasoning, that you’re relying on one part of the Bible to testify about another part of the Bible?”

“Of course, they would. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t true. The Flood was not an Old Testament myth. It really happened because Jesus said it happened. He was there. We believe the Bible is God’s Word because we know it’s true and because it’s radically changed our lives for the better. I’m saying this for your benefit so that you’ll start with the right assumptions, and you’ll have confidence in your beliefs.”

“Got it.”

“Now that we have the right assumptions, we can look at the physical evidence pointing to the Flood and a young earth. First of all, what would you expect to find on the earth if there had been a massive worldwide flood?”

McKenzie had to think for a minute. “I guess we would have to find evidence that the sea once covered the land.”

Sally nodded. “And what kind of evidence might that be?”

“Hmm. I guess finding fossils of sea creatures on the land would be pretty convincing.”

“I agree. You’re on the right track, McKenzie. Fossils of sea creatures have been found on the surface of every continent. In fact, these types of fossils have been found high in the Himalayas, 30,000 feet above sea level.”

McKenzie coughed. “How can that be? Were the floodwaters that deep?”

Sally opened her Bible and flipped to the beginning. “Genesis 7:11 states, ‘The springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.’”

“This resulted in a tumultuous breakup of the earth’s crust, volcanoes releasing molten lava, colossal earthquakes, and massive tsunamis. This continued for 150 days. The force was so great that tectonic rupturing of the earth’s surface caused an original single continent to be split into the seven continents we have today. Soil, rocks, and other debris were swirled around in the water at tremendous speeds, resulting in the death of millions of land- and water-based creatures, who were later buried in sediment, often thousands of feet deep. We see similar layers of sediment spread across the continents. As the water dissipated, the sediment hardened into rock, fossilizing the creatures. This hardening could have happened quickly if cementing minerals like quartz or calcite were present. The floodwaters were likely about two miles deep. Mountain ranges, like the Himalayas, were originally lower but were pushed upward by tectonic plate collisions after the Flood. Does that answer your question?”

McKenzie nodded. “Yes, but wouldn’t the Ark have been destroyed while all that turmoil was underway?”

“Tsunamis wreak tremendous devastation once they reach land but barely cause a blip in the open ocean where the waters are deep. The Ark would have been high enough above the seafloor to avoid much of the underwater chaos. The Ark was also well-designed. A Korean ship research center studied the dimensions of the Ark - 515 feet long, 86 feet wide, and 51.5 feet high - and determined its hull design was similar to modern-day cargo ships and was capable of withstanding 100-foot waves. Finally, it may be that God intervened to ensure his precious cargo remained safe throughout the duration of their journey . . . Does this make sense?”

“Yes, but how could all the species of the earth have fit in a single boat and survived for a year?”

“That’s a great question, McKenzie. First of all, the Ark only carried land-based vertebrates, birds, and other air-breathing creatures. A portion of sea-based creatures, like fish and amphibians, could have adapted to the changing waters and survived the Flood without being in the Ark. Secondly, the Bible uses the term “kinds” not “species” when referring to the animals who entered the Ark. A kind is equivalent to a family in the taxonomic ranking – Species, Genus, *Family*, Order, Class, Phylum, Kingdom, and Domain. By way of example, a red fox would be the Species; all true foxes would be the Genus; and dogs, jackals, wolves, and all foxes would be the Family.

“With this in mind, creation scientists determined that approximately 16,000 land-based vertebrates would be needed to procreate the 34,000 land-based vertebrate species we have today. For example, only two dogs, a male, and a female, would be needed to procreate the 200-plus dog species we have in the world today. It may be that God sent juveniles into the Ark instead of full-grown adults to reduce the amount of space and food required to sustain them.

Creation scientists estimate 400 tons of dry food would be required to feed all those animals for a year and that there would be sufficient space to house all the animals, food, and water on the Ark. Does this make sense to you?”

“That’s a lot of information, but yes, it does make sense.”

“Good. Now, let me talk about the age of the earth a bit. Fasten your seatbelt.”

McKenzie chuckled.

Sally took a deep breath. “Carbon-14 is an isotope which has a half-life of 5,703 years. It can be used to accurately date fossils up to 80,000 years old because radioactive decay occurs at a measured rate. As long as an organism is alive, it takes in Carbon-14. When it dies, the intake stops. Carbon-14 has been found in fossils at all geological layers. It has also been found in coal

and diamonds. It is therefore impossible for these items to be millions of years old, as evolutionists would argue.”

McKenzie lifted her hand. “That’s fine, Sally, but what you’ve discussed so far is theory. Do you have any concrete examples to back up what you’re saying about the age of the earth?”

Sally nodded. “A petrified clock, sparkplug, set of keys, hat, and a bag of flour have been found, proving that the process of fossilization does not necessarily take long periods of time.

“Scientists from the University of Montana found a tyrannosaurus rex bone that still contained blood cells and hemoglobin. These components might last thousands of years under the right conditions, but surely not millions of years.

“One of the most powerful examples that prove millions of years are not required to produce major geological changes is what happened at Mount St. Helens in the early 1980s.”

McKenzie leaned back. “Where is Mount St. Helens, and what happened there?”

“Mount St. Helens is a volcano located in Washington state. It erupted in 1980. Several other eruptions followed, resulting in the buildup of new rock formations up to 600 feet high.

On March 18, 1982, an abrasive mudflow occurred on the volcano’s north flank, cutting 600 feet into bedrock, forming the Step and Loowit Canyons. This happened in a single day and proved that massive geological changes need not take millions of years.”

McKenzie continued sipping her tea. “Speaking of canyons, how do creation scientists think the Grand Canyon was formed?”

“The Grand Canyon, located in Arizona, is 277 miles long, 3,000 - 6,000 feet deep, and 4 to 18 miles wide. Massive lakes, larger than the Great Lakes of today, were formed after the flood. It’s believed one of these lakes, ponded behind the Grand Canyon, was breached and cut through the Grand Canyon, hurling tremendous amounts of water and abrasive materials at it.

The result was the Grand Canyon as it looks today. Incidentally, most of the layers in the Grand Canyon contain marine fossils too.

“Interesting.”

“Another compelling fact is that the Redwall Limestone layer not only appears in the Grand Canyon but is also present in Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and even as far away as England. The same type of fossils is contained in the same strata sequence. This is strong evidence that the flood occurred on a global scale.”

“If the continents were split right after the Flood, how did Noah’s descendants travel to each of them?”

“Following the end of the flood, an ice age occurred, lasting about 700 years. Land bridges may have developed, allowing people and animals to travel to different continents.”

“Wow! Once again, you really know your stuff, Sally. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome, McKenzie.”

McKenzie placed her teacup on the table and stood up. “Thank you very much for all the information. It’s quite a bit to process. Thanks for the discipleship materials too. I think I’ll head out now. My brain is full. I’m looking forward to meeting with you next week.”

Sally stood up too. “I’m looking forward to seeing you next week. Maybe we’ll run into each other on Sunday.”

They walked to the front door, hugged, and McKenzie navigated down the grey slate steps to her car.