



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

DEFINITION OF DISCIPLESHIP

NOTES

Introduction and Definition

The word DISCIPLE comes from the Greek word “Mathetes” which means LEARNER. It implies a student/teacher relationship and necessitates the disciple’s adopting the philosophy, teaching, and practices of his teacher.

This is what Jesus had in mind when He called men to follow Him. He wanted men to leave their sinful way of living and adopt His new teaching, philosophy, practices, and lifestyle.

The learning progress of the disciples was not evaluated by their retention of information or knowledge taught. Rather it was to be demonstrated in their daily living. They were taught the true meaning of the commandments and how to fulfill them each day by imitating Jesus. Paul said it a little differently but hit at the same idea or issue.

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

The World’s Standard for Discipleship

By the world’s standard, a person is considered a good Christian if he goes to church for an hour every Sunday, tries to live a good life, and is kind to others. Some Christians tend to create their own standards for discipleship and end up creating God in their own image rather than allowing God to transform them into His likeness. Since the Scriptures are not all that important to them, they fail to realize that God has His own standards for discipleship.

Jesus’ Standard for Discipleship

Jesus was very clear about His standards for discipleship. Certain things were to characterize the life of every follower of Christ. Without these, Jesus said, a man could not be His disciple.

Continues in God’s Word

A disciple is characterized by a continuance in the Word of God. This is clearly seen in John’s Gospel.

*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
(John 8:31)*

In God's standard the Scriptures are of supreme importance since they reveal God and His will for us. If we are to continue in His Word, we must incorporate the various fingers of the Word Hand into our personal lives. Since Satan knows the value of the Word to strengthen us in our battle against him, he is forever trying to see that we have not time to read or study God's Word. Are you winning the battle?

Loves Others

A disciple is characterized by his love for others.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

(John 13:34-35)

One of the distinguishing marks of every disciple is the love he has for other people. Jesus was not just talking about loving other Christians; He was talking about *all men*. The tensions that exist between Christians, to say nothing of those that exist between non-Christians, make one wonder how well we are keeping this commandment.

If we are to follow Jesus' standard for discipleship to bring this area under the Lordship of Christ. We need to resolve our differences so we can love people.

Bears Much Fruit

A disciple is fruitful—both in the fruit of the Spirit and in the winning and discipling of others.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

(John 15:8)

The fruit John is primarily talking about is the people who come to Christ as a result of our witness. Are you asking God to give you men and women to win and disciple so that there will be fruit in your life?

Not only should we be concerned with the fruits of evangelism, but also with the fruits of the Spirit listed for us in Galatians.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

(Galatians 5:22-23)

The Spirit of God is ever at work trying to make these fruits a reality in our lives. How are you doing with them?

If we were to ask your family—those who know you best—to evaluate you in these attributes, how would they rate you?

Puts God First

A disciple must put God first above all other people—even one's self!

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.
(Luke 14:26)

Here Jesus says that our relationship to Him must come before every other human relationship. To children, it means God must come before their parents. To parents, it means God must come before their children. If we put Him first, the result will not be weaker relationships, but stronger ones.

In some instances it is easy to put God before others. But Jesus says we must not only place Him before others but also above ourselves. This is a somewhat harder task. But if we do not, we cannot be Jesus' disciple.

Bears His Cross

A disciple must not allow any thing or interest to hinder him from obediently following Christ.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.
(Luke 14:27)

When Jesus talks about putting God first in our lives, He brings us to a place where there is a cross. On that cross we must put to death our dreams and aspirations and replace them with His will. God can then redirect our lives so that He can live out His will for us in our bodies. For some people this is more of a cross than it is for others. To some it means a radical change, while to others it is only a minor correction. But to each it represents a cross because it means the death of our wills and the doing of His.

Jesus says a person cannot be His disciple unless he is willing to bear that cross. Are you willing?

Forsakes the old sinful ways

A disciple must forsake all the old ways of his life to follow Jesus.

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

(Luke 14:33)

In this passage Jesus rules out a double standard for discipleship. He did not say that we must be *willing* to forsake all we have. He did not say that there was going to be a watered-down form of discipleship for all who refuse to pay the price. He said, "...whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." Have you forsaken all? Does He count you as his disciple?

The Cost of Discipleship

Discipleship is a costly venture. It cost Jesus his life to redeem you and make you His disciple. Ten of the remaining apostles were put to death, martyred for their faith in Jesus. Only John escaped a violent death. But even he spent part of his later years exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith.

Discipleship is a costly venture no matter which way you decide. It will cost you your life if you are serious about exchanging your life for the fulfilling of Christ's Great Commission.

But discipleship is even more costly if we choose not to obey Christ and choose the temporal rather than the eternal values. It is only through a life of discipleship that we win for ourselves during the vapor of our life the eternal reward and crown that the New Testament writers tell us to be concerned about. It is only through discipleship that we can find our true self and be totally fulfilled and satisfied.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

(Matthew 16:24-26)