

# 22. What is a Disciple?

A DISCIPLE  
loves Jesus and loves to be in close relationship with Him.

Jesus is not an “add on” to his life;  
He is the center and inspiration of all that he does.

Let's go back 2000 years to the time that Jesus was on the earth. The Jews had been praying for a Messiah for a long time. They were under Roman occupation and were desperate for deliverance. They were looking for a military man who would free them from the Romans and restore to them their wealth and liberties. But when Jesus came as the Messiah, He came as a suffering Servant to give His life to purchase salvation for man. He did not meet their political expectations. So, most of them, including the very religious men, did not recognize Him as the Messiah sent from God.

There were others, though, who saw something very special in Jesus, and they left everything to follow Him. They left their families, jobs, homes and all that was familiar to them in order to be with the Lord. Because of the *relationship* that the disciples had with Jesus, they received *revelation* of Who He was. Just like the religious men of Jesus' day, we can have theories or head knowledge about God, and even call ourselves believers — yet not know Jesus *personally*. We can be very religious, but not have real relationship with the Lord. Jesus wants true disciples who love Him and want to know Him and be like Him.

## *What is a disciple?*

A disciple of Jesus is someone who has surrendered his whole life to God. He “sits at Jesus' feet” to be taught by Him. He wants to become just like his Master. A disciple is radical about Jesus. He or she has a close and growing relationship with God the Father, and is led by the Holy Spirit to do God's will.

## *Repent to enter the Kingdom of God*

In **Matthew 4:17**, Jesus was preaching “*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” It is interesting to see that Jesus' first message was a message of **repentance**. Jesus did not begin His ministry by inviting the sick to come for healing or by raising the dead. He began His public ministry by stressing the need for repentance toward God. Jesus knew that miracles would produce only *temporal awareness* of the Kingdom of God and not the *lasting fruit* that repentance would bring. Jesus did not want His listeners to be *aware* of the Kingdom only; He wanted them to be a *part* of it! He wanted them **IN** His Kingdom, experiencing His righteousness, peace and joy (**Romans 14:17**)!

Read **Acts 3:19**. To repent is to think differently, to change one's mind and direction. It is to turn from sin to holiness, from self-rule to Jesus' Lordship, from going our way to going God's way. It is dying to this world and all that distracts us from fully following Him.

**St. Gregory the Great** said, “*God never intended a distinction between being a Christian and being a disciple.*” Many people call themselves believers today, but their lives are not like our Lord's life at all! They live more for *themselves* than for Jesus. As far as the Bible is concerned, belief in Jesus automatically includes discipleship.

We are to become like Jesus in character, conduct, and power-filled ministry.

We are to be fully transformed into His image, not only to *part* of that image. Being a disciple is making Jesus central in our lives where all that we do revolves around Him. It is like signing a blank check, saying, "*Here, Lord, You fill it in. I delight to do Your will.*"

### ***Followers and disciples***

In **Luke 6:17-20**, Jesus made a distinction between those who only followed Him and those who were His disciples. The followers wanted what Jesus could give them: interesting teachings, healing, and freedom from demonic oppression. The disciples, however, were really committed to Jesus. They were not merely following Him for what He could do for them; they wanted to serve Him and be with Him. They did not just *add* Jesus to their lives; their lives revolved around Him!

There is a pastor in Peru who lost most of his church members to martyrdom. When asked how he could continue serving a God Who would allow that to happen, he said, "*We don't serve God for what we can get! We serve Him for what we can give! We give everything to Him!*"

When a man is in love with a woman, he generously gives his time and money to nurture that relationship! When you are devoted to Jesus, you want to give yourself to Him! You do not *want* to compromise! You *want* to be holy! You *want* to live sacrificially for Him.

### ***Discipleship demands a cross***

Read **Luke 4:5-8**. The devil offered Jesus a way to receive kingdoms, authority and glory without going to the cross. But Jesus refused. He knew salvation would not be possible for mankind if He did not embrace the cross. The devil offers us the same shortcut! He says we can have God's Kingdom and authority and share in His glory without self-sacrifice. He offers us a cross-less Christianity. But ***the cross is the entryway into God's Kingdom!*** It is at the cross where we repent, turning from our ways to embrace God's way. The cross always confronts the flesh. Read **Luke 9:23-26**. To do things the Lord's way is to gain our lives — to find our true selves.

The devil knows the power of self-sacrifice. He fears the resurrection power that follows the cross, and he does not want us to have that power. We can have and use the authority of Jesus only when we are ***under*** His authority! Jesus said in **John 12:24**, "*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*" Satan does not want us to bear fruit, especially much fruit, so he tempts us to preserve our lives. But it's only when we die to ourselves that we can bear much fruit.

The Lord wants us to have the same testimony that the Apostle Paul had. He wrote in **Galatians 2:20**, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*"

### ***True discipleship is costly!***

Embracing the cross will affect every area of our lives: how we use time, how we spend money, and how we handle relationships. We see an example of this in **Luke 9:57-62**.

Jesus "raised the bar" of what it would cost for these three men to follow Him.

The **first man** who wanted to follow Jesus had no idea of the amount of self-sacrifice that was required. He didn't know that Jesus sacrificed having his own home, comfort and privacy, and that to follow Him could cost him the same! Jesus didn't have the best donkey in the neighborhood or the best brand of sandals. He wasn't making a name or a place for Himself on this earth. His will was to please His Father, and His focus was on eternal things.

If you have an eternal perspective, you will have the same values that Jesus has. You will hold the things of this world lightly so that nothing prevents you from obeying God. This doesn't mean that you cannot enjoy material things. It means that you want to do God's will even at the expense of worldly goods. It means you care more about the eternal salvation of others than you do about your comfort and are willing to pay a high price for them to know Jesus.

The **second man** did not realize the price he would have to pay in respect to his timetable and finances. He wanted to follow the Lord in his own timing. He wanted to wait until his father died and he received his inheritance before following Jesus. He wanted financial security. But Jesus didn't live by worldly means — such as to wait for an inheritance before obeying. He trusted His Father to meet His needs. His security was not in a worldly system but in His Father's provision.

We might have other excuses, such as: "*When I finish school I will serve God.*" or "*When I'm older I'll follow Jesus; I want to enjoy life now.*" or "*When I make enough money, I'll be obedient to God's call on my life.*" But Jesus says, "Do not procrastinate! Obey God **NOW!**"

The **third man** did not realize the price he and his family would pay for him to obey God's call on his life. When we say "yes" to the Lord, our loved ones pay a price as well. If we go to the mission field, they pay the price of not having us near. When we are persecuted for our faith, they hurt with us as they see us suffer. But loyalty to Jesus must take precedence over all lesser loyalties. Jesus even said whoever does not hate his family in comparison to his love for Jesus is not worthy of Him! That's how much Jesus demands to be our first and greatest Love!

Once you decide to follow Jesus, do not look back longingly at who or what you are leaving. Do not set your heart on what the world can give you or on what you are giving up; it cannot **compare** with what Jesus has for you! True disciples of Jesus must give their undivided attention to His service. Half-hearted discipleship eliminates one from God's maximum use. Choosing to be His disciple will affect you in this life and in the life to come — for all eternity! The best and wisest thing to do with your life is to surrender it to the Lord!

Our discipleship to Jesus Christ costs us everything. But the cost of non-discipleship is far greater. **As Dallas Willard writes**, "*Non-discipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated thoroughly by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's supremacy for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, and power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said He came to bring.*" The cost of discipleship is a far better bargain than the cost of non-discipleship! Although discipleship costs everything, it will gain us **everything that matters!**