

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL DISCIPLE?

1. To many Christians the term “disciple” speaks of a believer who exhibits an acceptable level of observable Christian behavior. Since one’s behavior is a product of one’s convictions (values), we believe being a “disciple” should more accurately be understood to reflect a believer’s disposition and relationship with the Lord. In this lesson we seek to focus on a disciple’s heart attitude, rather than just what a disciple “does”.

... for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:7)

GODLY BEHAVIOR IS AN OUTCOME OF GODLY CONVICTIONS.

2. The pivotal issue that a disciple has dealt with is that of Christ’s lordship over his life. In other words, the believer has considered the claims of Christ, and has concluded that the best workable relationship is for the Lord to be in charge of his entire life. One of Christ’s claims is that of ownership (having authority over that which is owned).

1 Cor. 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

1 Cor. 7:23 *You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.*

God’s ownership of the Christian is a factual truth, which is not dependent on the believer’s acknowledgment of it. I do not bestow ownership, I can only acknowledge and act upon what He states to be already true. New believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because they don’t have preconceived ideas of God’s expectations. In contrast, older believers tend to accept this truth intellectually, but be resistant to the implications. What are the implications of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership? Does not an owner have the right to do whatever he wants with his property?

HE OWNS ME (WHETHER I BELIEVE IT OR NOT). HIS OWNERSHIP IS NOT DEPENDENT ON MY ACCEPTANCE.

It (being a disciple) involved personal allegiance to Him, expressed in following Him and giving Him an exclusive loyalty. In at least some cases it meant literal abandonment of home, business ties and possessions, but in every case readiness to put the claims of Jesus first, whatever the cost, was demanded. Such an attitude went well beyond the normal pupil-teacher relationship and gave the word ‘disciple’ a new sense. (The New Bible Dictionary)

**EVERY DISCIPLE IS A CONVERT,
BUT NOT EVERY CONVERT IS A BIBLICAL DISCIPLE.**

3. Another issue that a disciple has dealt with is that of Christ's command for His followers to accept a Master-servant relationship with Him.

Luke 14:25-33 *Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ... "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. (see NOTE below.)*

Rom. 6:19 ... *so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

1 Cor. 7:22 ... *he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.*

1 Peter 2:16 *act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.*

NOTE ON LUKE 14:25-33 The stress here is on the priority of love (compare Matt. 10:37 - "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.) One's loyalty to Jesus must come before his loyalty to his family or even to life itself. Indeed, those who did follow Jesus against their families' desires were probably thought of as hating their families. (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Ill: Scripture Press Pub., Inc.)

4. A disciple of Jesus is more than just a student, he is an apprentice.

Unfortunately, many in the Western Hemisphere have adopted the secular teacher-student method for growing believers. There are significant factors that favor this approach, such as busyness and perceived efficiency. However, what appears to be most efficient is not necessarily what is most effective.

The teacher-disciple model demands a greater commitment, and much more personal attention, but we believe it is the Biblical method as modeled by Jesus Himself, and the model that will result in the greatest individual spiritual growth and impact on the world.

A Student – Typically the goal of a student is to learn knowledge (information), that is, to learn what the teacher knows. The student may not even respect or like his teacher.

A Disciple – A disciple on the other hand is a student who has the goal of becoming like his teacher. This model requires personal interaction, and a personal commitment by the teacher (mentor, spiritual parent) on behalf of the apprentice learner.

***A STUDENT WANTS TO KNOW WHAT THE TEACHER KNOWS,
A DISCIPLE WANTS TO BECOME LIKE THE TEACHER.***

Luke 6:40 (Jesus said) “A *pupil* (apprentice learner) is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be **like his teacher**.

Matthew 10:24-25 (Jesus said) “A *disciple* is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. “It is enough for the disciple that he become **like his teacher**, and the slave **like his master**. ...

***ALL DISCIPLES ARE STUDENTS,
BUT NOT ALL STUDENTS ARE DISCIPLES.***

5. A disciple has a desire to know God, not just know “about” Him.

Jer. 9:23-24 *Thus says the Lord, ... let him who boasts boast of this, that he **understands** and **knows Me**, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.*

Luke 10:38-42 ... *He (Jesus) entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated **at the Lord’s feet**, **listening** to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only **one** thing is necessary, for Mary has **chosen** the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*

John 17:3 “This is eternal life, **that they may know You**, the only true God, **and Jesus Christ** whom You have sent.

Romans 12:2 ... **do not be conformed** to this world, but **be transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

6. A disciple has the attitude of one who follows the Lord, not one who “leads” the Lord.

Luke 5:10-11 ... *And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” When they had brought their boats to land, they **left everything and followed Him**.*

Luke 9:23-24 *And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and **follow Me**. “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever **loses his life for My sake**, he is the one who will save it.*

John 12:24-26 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. “If anyone serves Me, he **must follow Me**; and **where I am**, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

7. What has been described in the previous points should not imply that a disciple of Jesus is super spiritual or beyond the capacity to sin. Although the disciple's acceptance of Christ's yoke has given the Holy Spirit the freedom to mold him, he still has a capacity to disobey, and he can submit to the sinful human nature for varying lengths of time.

The fact that the disciple has made the choice to acknowledge the lordship of Christ over his life has set the general direction of his Christian life, but the everyday application of learned convictions will depend on the disciple's continual willingness to yield up areas of his life to His authority. The battle has been won, but there are many skirmishes.

Because being a disciple has more to do with one's disposition than with behavior, even a wholehearted disciple can find himself in a quagmire of defeat if he does not understand how to consistently abide in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

One of the responsibilities of Church leadership is to convey to the congregation that each believer should aspire to be used by the Holy Spirit as a "witness", and also as a "spiritual parent" (discipler).

One characteristic that is typically evident in the life of a disciple of Jesus is a discernible "passion for the Lord".

"... He (God) raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'

(Acts 13:22)

WHERE AM I AS A CHRISTIAN?

