What is a Disciple?

DISCIPLE DEFINED

A disciple is a learner in the general sense, one who is exploring/learning/following the teachings of another. A disciple of Jesus, therefore, is one who explores/learns/follows him. But merely to learn is not enough. We need put what we learn into practice and keep a consistent obedience if we are truly to be counted as one of Jesus' disciples. We must give visible proof that we are Jesus' disciples through practicing genuine love towards each other, being obedient to His Word, and bearing spiritual fruit in our lives.

The Hebrew term for a disciple is *talmidim*, which is also derived from the word for "to learn" (in Hebrew) and was used for a young man who left his home to study under a Rabbi. (Anne Spangler and Louis Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2009) 54.)

Dallas Willard – "We progressively learn to lead our lives as he [*Jesus*] would if he were us."

Greg Finke – "According to Jesus, a disciple is someone who follows him in order to become like him."

Jesus' system was and is a "follow me" system. It is a system we must learn. The church needs a band of everyday people who are flesh-and-blood examples of what it means to follow Jesus. There is no substitute for people who are incarnating the Word of God and have invited others to live alongside them as they work out their salvation. Disciples must make disciples, teaching others as they were shown, bring others alongside as they serve.

1. How can you be a learner of Christ?

   _____

   _____

2. When Jesus called the Twelve to be His disciples, what did He ask them to do? (Mark 1:16-20; 2:14)

   _____

3. How does being a follower of Christ affect one's life? (Matthew 28:19-20)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

I believe that the best place to start is with how Jesus and the apostles defined a disciple.

So how is it that we follow Jesus?

- **Live like Jesus** – The New Testament is the story of how Jesus lived. Walk in his ways as salt, light; humbly; forgiving; to walk in radical abandonment for His glory; to be willing to give up everything: family, career, dreams, safety, comfort, position, possessions, ultimately our lives; to live with faithful adherence to His person; to live with urgent obedience to His mission - **Luke 14:27** *Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple*.; **John 8:31** *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples*; **John 15:8, 16** *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples…You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you*.; **1 Corinthians 11:1** *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*.; **Colossians 1:10** *so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

  God is glorified when the life of a disciple reproduces the obedient life of Jesus. The 'fruit' of which Jesus is speaking here is in effect their maturing into the likeness of Him.

  Galatians 5:19-25 *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

  1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

  "There is no separation between believing and following, between faith and obedience." – Lesslie Newbigin

- **Love like Jesus** – unconditionally, loving those who are not like us – The Great Commandment. **John 13:34-35** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*; **John 15:12, 17** *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you…These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*; **Romans 13:8** *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

  Love for God's people is the distinguishing badge and character of a disciple of Christ, love for one another; brotherly love was the distinctive character.

  The true Christian loves another believer wherever they are found equally, whether prince or slave, in a mansion of wealth or a cottage of poverty. They overlook the distinction of sect, of color, and nations, and wherever they find a man who bears the Christian name and manifests the Christian spirit, there is loves.

  In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis wrote, "Do not waste your time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor, act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great

secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less." (sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/71686/in-his-book-mere-christianity-c-s-lewis-wrote-by-don-jones)

- **Learn from Jesus** – learn then obey **Mt. 28:19** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*;

  Luke 6:40

  John 8:31-32 *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* To follow Jesus is to believe His Word and incorporate it into your everyday life.

  To 'continue' or 'remain' in Jesus' Word is to hold fast to His teaching – to direct our lives by it. The power of what He said had already moved some of His hearers to believe Him, but discipleship is something continuous; it is a way of life. A true disciple has an attraction for his teacher's instruction and accepts it, not blindly but intelligently. No passing emotion, no empty profession, constitutes Christian discipleship, but the teacher's instruction becomes the disciple's rule of faith and practice. It is our continuance in putting Christ's Words into effect in our lives that is proof of our salvation. It is not sufficient to receive God's truth - we must keep and walk in it. And it is only when we obtain the truth, love it, keep it, and walk in it, that we are the sincere disciples of Christ.

  John 14:15 "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*"

  1 Peter 1:2 *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

  1 Peter 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

  1 John 2:4-6 *Whoever says, "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

The result of following Jesus is that He will make us fishers of men, i.e., disciple-makers

- **Lead others to Jesus** – Making disciples of Jesus is the overflow of our delight in being disciples of Him. **Matt. 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*; **Acts 1:8** *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

  And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)

  William Barclay, in *The Apostles' Creed for Everyman,* writes, "Jesus did not say "discuss me"; he said, "follow me." We do not make terms with Christ; we surrender to Christ. We do not compromise with Christ; we submit to Christ. Christianity does not mean being interested in

Jesus Christ; it means taking the same oath as princes take to a king or queen in a coronation ceremony and saying, "I am your liege man of life and limb, and faith and truth will I bear to you against all manner of folk. So, help me God." (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1967), p. 68.

When Jesus invites Peter and Andrew to come and be His disciples, He is not just asking them to become learners, but to become learners who share what they have learned with others. His whole purpose of making disciples is so that they will make further disciples; those who will then live like Jesus, love like Jesus, learn more of Jesus and lead others to Jesus (fish for more disciples)

Jesus did not just call the disciples to be "pew" potatoes, but to become fishermen who catch fish.

So, the start of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) is Jesus' call for us to be fishers of men (Mt. 4:19).

THE GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

What is the goal of discipleship? Jesus said that making disciples is teaching others what He has spent the last three years teaching them. How to live a righteous, holy life; how to love others unconditionally; true knowledge of God's Word; helping cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer; helping others on their journey of developing Christ-like character; helping to connect new believers into a biblical community through baptism.

His goal was a global movement of multiplication. It is the idea of making 3-D images of Himself and then deploying them into the world. Jesus intended for his disciples not just keep what He taught them to themselves, but to share it and to make more disciples.

THE CONDITIONS OF BEING A DISCIPLE

When you come to personal dealings with others, remember who you are--not a special being made up in heaven, but a sinner saved by grace. ~Oswald Chambers (Held by the Grip of God | My Utmost For His Highest. https://utmost.org/held-by-the-grip-of-god/)

In the Gospels, Christ speaks of four clear conditions that distinguish people as His disciples. These conditions are not levels of perfection or accomplishments that one can achieve but instead are areas where one makes a sincere and continuing commitment to follow Christ in obedience. As one commits, the Holy Spirit will work in him the necessary changes. Look up each passage, list conditions found, and describe how it would be applied in your life.

Mark 1:14-15 _____

_____

Matthew 16:24-25 _____

_____

_____

Luke 14:33 _____

_____

John 8:31-32 _____

_____

1 John 2:3-6 _____

_____

John 13:34-35 _____

_____

John 15:8 _____

_____

What did Jesus mean by "fruit?" _____

_____

_____

THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE
Sacrifice

Read Luke 14:25-33 to answer the following questions.

1. What did Jesus mean in verse 26 when He said that one must hate his family and his own life to be Jesus' disciple?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What was the mistake of both the builder in verse 28-30 and the king in verse 31-32?

   _____

   _____

3. What is the cost of being a disciple according to verse 33?

   _____

   _____

4. When Jesus called the disciples, what did they give up to follow Christ? Luke 5:11, 27, 28?

   _____

   _____

5. What happens to a person who starts out desiring to be a disciple of Christ, but is not willing to surrender everything to Him?

   _____

_____

6. Besides being willing to sacrifice all or anything, one has, what else must one be willing to do?

   Romans 8:17_____

   Matthew 5:11 _____

   Matthew 8:22 _____

   Matthew 10:37 _____

   Matthew 19:16-22 _____

Take Up your cross

"If the message of the Cross is at the center of the Christian faith, it is the life of the Cross that is at the heart of Christian discipleship." – John Koessler, *true discipleship* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Publishers, 2003), 25.

The call to take up your cross and follow Jesus involves a personal commitment to Him, which takes priority over everyone and everything else. F.F. Bruce says, "The interest of God's kingdom must be paramount with the followers Jesus, and everything else must take second place to them, even family ties." (*The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1983), 119.)

Read Luke 14:25-33 to answer the following questions.

7. What does it mean to deny yourself?

   _____

   _____

8. What does it mean to take up your cross?

   _____

   _____

9. Why are we not worthy of Christ if we do not take up our cross? (Matthew 10:38)

   _____

   _____

   _____

10. Why daily?

   _____

   _____

11. Why does losing our life save it?

_____

_____

_____

Everything of oneself

Do not confuse the cost of salvation with the cost of being a disciple. Because of Christ's suffering and sacrifice, God made salvation available to all humanity. Salvation is a free gift to all who would believe and receive Christ. Salvation cannot be earned; Christ paid the cost of our salvation. However, becoming a disciple of Christ is a whole different matter. To become a disciple of Christ will require everything of oneself. Discipleship requires a full surrender of one's life, a willingness to suffer for Christ no matter how great, and a commitment to serve his Lord, however, He directs. Becoming a disciple does not earn one's salvation but is an evidence of salvation.

12. Read Philippians 2:12. The verse states that one is to work out his salvation. So, what does working out one's salvation mean?

_____

_____

_____

13. Read John 15:15. What kind of relationship should one have with Christ?

_____

_____

_____

14. To have an abiding relationship with Christ means one has an unconditional commitment to Christ. As a response to Christ's great love, one loves Him so much that he will never allow anything to separate him from Christ. Read Romans 8:35-39. List what things should never cause one to separate from God's love which is in Christ Jesus.

_____

_____

_____

15. How important was knowing (having a close relationship with) Christ to the Apostle Paul? (Philippians 3:8)

_____

_____

_____

16. How does knowing the cost of discipleship keep us from making rash decisions about Christ?

_____

As you grow in your connection with Christ, you will grow in your commitment to Him. If one just has a superficial relationship with Christ, he will have a shallow commitment to Him. If one has a close relationship with Christ, he will have a deep abiding commitment to Him.

HINDRANCES TO DISCIPLESHIP

Not being rooted in the Word of God

1. Mark 4:14-15 states that Satan can "take away" the Word of God that is sown in people's lives. Satan frequently uses doubts to "take away" or make ineffective, the Word of God. How can doubts take away the effectiveness of God's Word?

_____

_____

_____

_____

In Mark 4:16-17, it says that some will fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted (opposed because of their beliefs). They will not last long because they have no deep roots.

2. What do roots do for plants?

_____

_____

3. What does "roots" mean concerning our relationship with Christ?

_____

_____

_____

4. What can happen if we are not rooted in Christ (the Word), according to Colossians 2:8?

_____

_____

Emotions

5. It says in Mark 4:16 that they "receive it with joy." This implies an emotional commitment. Why don't emotional commitments last?

_____

_____

Worries

Mark 4:18-19 states that the worries of this life can crowd out, or make ineffective, the Word of God in your life.

6. What are some of your cares or worries?

_____

_____

7. How can what one worries about affect their growth as a disciple?

_____

_____

_____

Wealth

Mark 4:19 mentions that the deceitfulness of riches can make the Word of God ineffective in one's life.

8. What do most people believe that having a lot of money can do for them?

_____

_____

9. If gaining wealth were one's primary goal in life, how would this affect his/her growth as a disciple?

_____

_____

_____

10. Read 1Timothy 6:6-10. What can happen to one's spiritually when they desire riches more than pleasing Christ?

_____

_____

_____

11. How did the riches of the ruler hinder his ability to follow Jesus? (Luke 18:18-23)

_____

_____

12. How might riches hinder us from following Jesus?

_____

_____

Desires of the flesh

The "the desire for other things" (i.e., self-satisfaction) is also mentioned in Mark 4:19 as something that can crowd out God's Word in one's life.

13. Lust is a desire that controls a person. List some of the things for which people lust.

_____

_____

14. Look up 1 John 2:15-17. What three types of lust (cravings) do people have?

_____

_____

_____

15. What types of things would "desires of the flesh" include?

_____

_____

_____

16. What types of things would "desires of the eyes" include?

_____

_____

_____

17. How do people take pride in their possessions and achievements?

_____

_____

_____

Having the wrong motives (Luke 9:57-62)

18. Read Luke 9:57-58. How did Jesus respond to the one who said, "I will follow you wherever you go"?

_____

_____

_____

19. If Jesus was testing the man's motives, what wrong motives might the man have?

_____

_____

In verses 59-61, two others are called to follow Christ.

20. What was each one's response?

_____

_____

_____

21. The phrase "first let me" was used by both. How can putting other things before Christ hinder one from being Christ's disciple?

_____

_____

The problem of pride

Pride is an deeply directed emotion that refers to an inflated sense of one's status or accomplishments. It is a feeling that you are more important or better than other people.

Pride manifests itself in many ways. One of the ways is that we do not want to admit we need help. We prefer to struggle and even fail before we ask for any help. Read the following verses. What do they say about pride?

Proverbs 11:2 _____

Proverbs 16:18 _____

Pride deceives a person into believing that he can do anything on his own, without the help of others. Pride will cause one to stumble and fall. Many, if not all Christians, have had to fail many times before they were willing to get help from others. One's failures have a way of humbling him. Rather than letting his failures cause him to give up and quit, he must let his failures cause him to humble himself before God and others. Read the following scriptures and list the benefits of humility.

Proverbs 29:23 _____

James 4:10 _____

1 Peter 5:5 _____

To humble oneself means first to recognize one's need of God and others.

Once one recognizes that he needs help, he needs to admit that need to God and others to receive their assistance. James 4:6 states that God gives grace to the humble. God's grace is not just His forgiveness but also His power, which enables us to obey. So the more one humbles himself, the more he will have God's ability to overcome and be victorious.

22. What happens to those who humble themselves and confess their faults? James 5:16

_____

_____

_____

Being a disciple of Christ will be very challenging and, at times, overwhelming. You will not be able to go it alone; you will need help from other Christians. Just like a newborn child, a new Christian cannot make it on his own. A new Christian must have support from a more mature Christian to be able to survive. But unlike a child who grows up and becomes independent, believers need help from others no matter what their level of spiritual development. So wither you are a new Christian or a mature Christian, we all need help from other Christians. God planned it so that we need each other. We must win as a team, or we do not win at all.

Look up the following scriptures and list the various ways we need each other as Christians.

Hebrews 10:24 _____

Hebrews 10:25 _____

Ephesians 6:18 _____

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 _____

Galatians 6:1 _____

Galatians 6:2 _____

Worldly/Fleshly nature

1. What type of food can an infant Christian feed on (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)?

   _____

2. What does milk represent (vs. 2)?

   _____

   _____

3. What does solid food represent (vs. 2)?

   _____

   _____

4. Why were the Corinthians still only able to handle milk?

   _____

   _____

5. According to 1 Corinthians 3:3, what are two characteristics of a worldly/fleshly nature?

   _____

   _____

CHARACTER OF A DISCIPLE

In your own words how do the following character traits show you are a disciple;

Love for the Word of God _____

_____

_____

Love for people _____

_____

_____

Teachable spirit _____

_____

_____

Disciplined life _____

_____

_____

Faithfulness _____

_____

_____

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING DISCIPLES

Greg Finke – "Discipling is Jesus' process of showing the people of God how to participate in the mission of God as a daily lifestyle." (*Joining Jesus - Show Me How: How to Disciple Everyday Missionaries*)

"God's primary plan for the church is for disciples of Jesus to develop other men and women into disciples!" ~ Bill Hull

1. What was Christ telling His followers to do? (Matthew 28:19-20)

   _____

   _____

2. When a person studies the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), they will discover that Jesus spent most of His three years of ministry training His disciples. What does this show about Jesus' priorities? (Mark 3:13-15)

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Jesus' concern was not to gather large crowds but to train men whom the multitudes would follow. Christ concentrated on a few. Who does the apostle Paul direct Timothy to focus on training in his ministry? (2 Timothy 2:2)

_____

_____

_____

HOW JESUS MADE DISCIPLES

He modeled his life.

> *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* (1 John 1:1-3)

How did Paul make disciples, he modeled it.

> *You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, … But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it* (2 Timothy 3:10, 14 ESV)

Jesus Christ Disciple-maker – Bill Hull

Come and See: John 1:35-39a *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and you will see."*

Come and Follow Me
Come and Be with Me
Remain in Me

Joining Jesus Show Me How – Greg Finke

Proclamation: Mark 1:14-15 *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

Sharing the gospel message which leads to transformation

Imitation/Participation: Mark 1:17 And Jesus said to them, "*Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men*."

Watch, imitate, participate

Replication: Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Jesus is sending His disciples out to do with others what He has been doing with them over the past three years. As Finke says, "It's time for me to show others what I have discovered about joining Jesus." *Joining Jesus Show Me How*, (Tyler, Tx, Tenthpower Publishing, 2017), p. 114.

4. What was Christ telling His followers to do? (Matthew 28:19-20)

_____

_____

⇨ LIVING OUT WHAT YOU KNOW

Based on what you just studied, answer the following:

1. How has being a follower of Christ affected your life so far?

   _____

   _____

List some ways you have demonstrated obedience to Christ in the four conditions of discipleship:

2. Denying self and putting Christ first:

   _____

   _____

3. How well have you been able to overcome doubts about God's Word and His love for you?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Of the following choices, circle the one that best describes your commitment to obey Christ: 1)"shallow," 2)"conditional," 3)"emotional," 4)"half-hearted," 5)"off and on," 6)"not complete, but it's growing," 7)"the die is cast, I have made up my mind to follow Christ no matter what the cost."
5. How might the cares and worries of your life be affecting your growth as a disciple?

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. After considering what Jesus says to do about our cares in Matthew 6:25-34, how should you deal with those worries?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. Obeying God's Word:

   _____

   _____

8. Loving other Christians:

   _____

   _____

9. Bearing fruit (growing Christ-like character and bringing others to Christ):

_____

10. What are you seeking for most in your life?

_____

_____

11. Is making money more important to you than spiritual growth and service?

_____

_____

_____

12. Are you willing to surrender all your desires, wishes, and dreams to Christ?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____