

Being a Disciple

When Jesus called men and women to follow Him, what did He expect of them? And was it reasonable? What's the difference between those who say they're Christians and everyone else? What proves whether a person is a true disciple of Jesus Christ or not?

These are the questions we want to answer as we search out what the Bible has to say about the subject of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Our mission at CBMC is to carry out the Great Commission to *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ...* (Matthew 28:19-20). So its pretty important, wouldn't you say, that we understand what it is we are to go and make? And wouldn't you also agree that we must first be a disciple before we can make other disciples?

We will discover what God's Word says and means about being a disciple, and then we must determine if we will order our lives according to its truth.

Matthew 4:17-22

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

18 And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

20 And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him.

21 And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the [son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

22 And they immediately left the boat

OBSERVE

A disciple is a follower. Moses had disciples, the Pharisees had disciples, John the Baptist had disciples. When Jesus began His public ministry, He, too, looked for disciples so that, when His work was finished and He left to be with the Father again, there would be others who would faithfully carry on the work of the kingdom of God – a kingdom that was now at hand.

INSIGHT

The Greek word translated as *disciple* comes from a verb that means "to learn." A disciple attached himself to another to gain practical or theoretical knowledge by instruction or experience. It was a word used of apprentices learning a trade as well as students learning a teacher's philosophy. Customarily, disciples left home and moved in with their teacher, who provided their food and lodging. The disciples became his servants and were under his total authority.

As we begin, let's look at a passage that shows us how Jesus called His first disciples.

Leader: Read Matthew 4:17-22 and have the group say aloud and mark "follow(ed)" by underlining it and putting an arrow on the end of the line, like this: 

and their father, and followed Him.

When Jesus asked them to follow Him, what did He say He would make them? What do you think He meant by this?

How did these four fishermen respond to Jesus' call?

Both Jesus' call and the men's responses are in the aorist tense, which generally means a completed action at a point in time – a decisive moment when a decision is made that will have an on-going impact. Based on this insight, did Jesus call them to just accompany Him that day, or did He call them to something else?

INSIGHT

Jesus took about a year and a half to complete His choice of the twelve disciples. Then they were with Him about two years. The four men called in this Matthew 4 passage had a previous knowledge of Jesus, and at least one of them, Peter's brother Andrew, already believed Him to be the Messiah. (John 1:35-51) Halley's Bible Handbook

How does this insight add to your understanding of the Matthew 4 account?

DISCUSS

Based on what we have learned thus far, describe the **call of a disciple**.

Leader: Has anyone experienced the "call of a disciple" as just described? Take a few minutes to hear their testimony.

OBSERVE

The twelve disciples were just the beginning. Jesus wanted others to follow Him, to be His disciples. Let's look at another passage that deals with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Mark 8:34-38

34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.

36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

37 "For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Leader: Read Mark 8:34-38 and have the group say aloud and mark "disciples" the same way they marked follow previously –  Also say aloud and mark "anyone" with a big A.

To whom is Jesus speaking in these verses?

When Jesus said "If anyone wishes to come after Me," the Greek tense of the verb *comes* implies continuous or habitual action. Jesus wasn't talking about a casual walk. If a person chooses to come after Jesus, what specific things must he do? Put a number (1,2,3) with a circle around it near each of the points in the text and list them below.

Do you think Jesus was talking about being His disciple?

A paradox is a seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true. ([The American Heritage Dictionary](#)) What is the paradox in Mark 8:35, and what is the explanation in Mark 8:36,37?

DISCUSS

When Jesus called the disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross, what in essence was He saying to them?

How does denying yourself and taking up your cross relate to losing your life for Jesus' sake and the gospel's?

Luke 14:25-35

25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

26 "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.

27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it?

29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule

And what about those who refuse to follow Jesus because of the cost? What do you learn about them from the text?

According to this passage, is it possible to be saved and not be a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Would this be considered a radical teaching in the church that you attend?

OBSERVE

Lets look at another passage, this one in Luke's gospel, that records what Jesus said to those clamoring to follow Him.

*Leader: Read Luke 14:25-35 and have the group say aloud and mark **disciple** as you have before. Take special note of the three reasons Jesus says you cannot be My disciple.*

What are the three reasons a person cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Do you think Jesus is speaking figuratively, using hyperbole, or speaking literally? Why or why not?

What point is Jesus making with His illustration of building a tower and going to war?

him,

30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand [men] to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?"

32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace.

33 "So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

34 "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?"

35 "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

DISCUSS

Based on what we've studied in Mark and Luke, do you believe Jesus requires the same today for those who desire "to come after Him" – or is this for some elite group of believers? Why?

If Jesus were standing before you today, saying the same thing, how would you respond to an invitation like this?

Based on this passage in Mark and Luke, and our discussion, how would you describe the **cost of discipleship**?

Leader: Encourage members to briefly share what the cost of discipleship has been for them.

OBSERVE

We've looked at the call of a disciple and the cost of discipleship. Now we want to look at the **commitment of a disciple**.

What proves whether a person is a true disciple of Jesus Christ or not? Is it possible to be a disciple, a learner, a follower for a while, and not be a true believer in Jesus Christ?

Lets see what Jesus says about true discipleship.

*Leader: Have the group read aloud with you John 8:31. Mark **disciples** as you have been doing, also mark believe with a big **B**, circle the word **if**, and double underline the phrase **truly disciples of mine**.*

John 8:31

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.

Leader: Read aloud the INSIGHT BOX.

INSIGHT
<p>The verb translated as <i>continue</i> in John 8:31 means to remain or stay (in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy). It is also translated in some versions as <i>abide</i>. It is presented in the Greek of this verse as a conditional statement – "If you continue" – something that remains to be seen. The text is saying that if you remain or continue in Jesus' teaching then it proves you're a genuine disciple. The validation of true discipleship is to not depart from the Word of God, but to continue in it, to keep on believing, to keep on following, and thus ordering your life accordingly.</p>

To whom is Jesus speaking in John 8:31?

What does the text tell you about them?

What is Jesus' admonition to them? What is the **commitment of a true disciple?**

John 13:34-35

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Leader: Read aloud John 13:34-35 and mark again any reference to **disciples**, put a heart over every mention of **love**, and circle the phrase **even as**

According to these verses, what proves to others that a person is a disciple of Jesus Christ?

To what extent did Jesus love us?

OBSERVE

We are now going to look at John 15, but lets first put ourselves into context. Judas has just left the upper room to betray Jesus. Jesus and His eleven disciples then leave the upper room to proceed to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Eleven of the twelve have remained faithful – one has walked away. Judas chose not to abide, not to remain in his relationship

John 15:1-8

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every [branch] that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither [can] you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

8 "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and [so] prove to be My disciples.

with Jesus Christ. This is apparently what prompted Jesus to teach what it means to abide and what happens if you don't.

*Leader: Read aloud through John 15:1-8. This is an allegory; it's a description of one thing using the image of another. Mark every reference to **Jesus** with a cross. Mark every reference to **fruit** by drawing a box around it. Mark every reference, and say aloud, **abide**. If it says "does not abide," then add a slash through the box.*

DISCUSS

What does Jesus liken Himself to? What does He liken the disciples to?

What did you learn from marking **abide**? What happens to those who abide in Jesus?

What happens to those who do not abide in Jesus?

What proves that a person is a true disciple of Jesus Christ?

Lets summarize what we have learned about the commitment of a disciple from these passages written by John, the *disciple whom Jesus loved*.

- John 8:31
- John 13:34-35
- John 15:1-8

Leader: Encourage the group to share any thoughts or concerns about the commitment of a disciple. Have they known anyone who has fallen away?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES DISCOVERED

- The **call of a disciple** is to follow Jesus, become like Jesus, and join Him in His work to redeem mankind.
- The **cost of being a disciple** is to deny yourself, die to self, and follow Jesus continually as the habit of your life. It is the total commitment of oneself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, taking precedence over our wants and needs, over other relationships, over material things.
- The **commitment of a true disciple** is to not depart from the Word of God, to abide continually, to stay the course, to finish well.
- **True Christianity is discipleship.**

BUSINESS APPLICATION

1. Are you a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Have you heard the call, counted the cost, denied yourself, died to self, and are you habitually, daily, following Jesus? Is there anything that is more important to you than Jesus Christ?
2. Does your business reflect that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? Have you ever consciously, willfully, given your business to Jesus? Have you ever denied your personal business aspirations, put to death your business goals and objectives, and given Jesus control?

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