

ARE YOU A **TRUE** DISCIPLE OF JESUS?

Introduction

1. In accordance with the scriptures, Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead (**Matthew 27:32-61; 28:1-10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4**).
2. Shortly after His resurrection, Jesus met with His eleven disciples (Judas had hung himself), and in what is called “The Great Commission” (**Matthew 28:18-20**), Jesus, having received all authority in heaven and in earth, commanded His disciples, saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...”. The goal of their evangelism of the world was to “make disciples”.
3. Are you a *true* disciple of Jesus? The majority of us here (King’s Cross) today have believed and obeyed the gospel (**Mark 16:16**), and, no doubt, consider ourselves *true* disciples of Christ. Paul says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). Is it not also good to examine as to whether we are true disciples of Christ? This, then, is what we shall do in this brief lesson.



I. THE DEFINITION OF DISCIPLESHIP

We begin by defining the concept of discipleship.

A. The Meaning Of *Disciple*:

1. In short, a disciple is a student.
 - a. A disciple is one who disciplines himself in the teachings and practices of another. The word *disciple*, like *discipline*, comes from the Latin word *discipulus*, meaning “pupil” or “learner.”
 - b. Consequently, to learn is to discipline oneself. For example, if one is to advance in the arts or the sciences or athletics, one has to discipline himself and to learn and follow the principles and fundamentals of the best teachers in that area of study. So it was and is with the disciples of Christ. A disciple follows Jesus.
 - c. When Jesus called His first disciples, He spoke the simple words, “Follow Me” (**Mark 1:17; 2:14; John 1:43**). A disciple is a follower, one who trusts and believes in a teacher and follows that teacher’s words and example. Therefore, to be a disciple is to be in a relationship. It is having an intimate, instructive, and imitative relationship with the teacher. Consequently, being a disciple of Jesus Christ is being in relationship with Jesus - it is seeking to be like Jesus. In other words, we follow Christ to be like Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1**) because as His disciples, we belong to Christ. The disciple of Jesus has certain traits that are commensurate with a relationship with Jesus.
2. In the great commission, Jesus says, “make disciples” and “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (**Matthew 28:19-20**). So we can see that being a disciple involves *learning* the teachings of Christ and *abiding in Christ’s teaching*. Jesus Himself said, “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed” (**John 8:31**).
3. W.E. Vine’s definition of “disciple”: “1. *mathetes* (G3101), lit., ‘a learner’... hence it denotes ‘one who follows one’s teaching,’ as the ‘disciples’ of John (**Matthew 9:14**)... it is used of the ‘disciples’ of Jesus (a) in a wide sense, of Jews who became His adherents (**John 6:66; Luke 6:17**)... ; (b) especially of the twelve apostles (**Matthew 10:1; Luke 22:11**); (c) of all who manifest that they are His ‘disciples’ by abiding in His Word (**John 8:31**; cf. **John 13:35; 15:8**); (d) in the Acts, of those who believed upon Him and confessed Him (**Acts 6:1-2; 6:7; 14:20; 14:22; 14:28; 15:10; 19:1**, etc.). A ‘disciple’ was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher (cf. **John 8:31; 15:8**)”.



B. The Goal Of A Disciple:

1. Stated by Jesus Himself: to be like his teacher.

“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master” (**Luke 6:40**).

2. The goal of a disciple is to be “as his master”. John says, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world” (**1 John 4:17**). This will take an effort on our part: learning what Jesus is like and striving to imitate Him. This means walking in the light, purifying ourselves, and walking in righteousness.

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (**1 John 1:7**).

“And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (**1 John 3:3**).

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (**2 Corinthians 7:1**).

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous” (**1 John 3:7**).

3. Becoming like the Master aligns with God's goal in the redemption of mankind; that we be conformed to the image of His Son.

“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (**Romans 8:29**).

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

II. THE MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus gave us some identifying marks which help to further identify a true disciple.

A. A True Disciple Abides In Jesus' Words:

1. To those who believed in Him, Jesus said:

“If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed” (**John 8:31**).

2. This would imply being a diligent student of the teachings of Christ; devoting ourselves to reading, studying, and meditating on the scriptures.

3. Knowing the scriptures is not enough; we must ensure that we are *doers* of the word:

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (**Matthew 7:21-27**).

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (**James 1:21-25**).

B. A True Disciple Loves The Brethren:

- Consider what Jesus said to His followers:

“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**).

- We are to love one another with a love patterned after the love of Jesus: “as I have loved you” (**13:34**). In order to fully understand how Jesus loved His disciples and how He loves us, it is necessary to study the gospels.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (**1 John 3:16**).

- With a love that is visible to the world: “by this all will know” (**13:35**). A love unseen is no love.

“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (**1 John 3:17-18**).

C. Bears Much Fruit:

- Jesus said to His disciples:

“Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit; so shall ye be My disciples” (**John 15:8**).

“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**).

- Notice the word “much” (also found in verse 5). Jesus is not talking about an occasional good deed, but, rather, a lifestyle which prompts people to glorify God! Indeed we have been created in Christ Jesus for good works (**Ephesians 2:10**).

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (**Matthew 5:16**).

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (**1 Peter 2:12**).

- Failure to bear much fruit will result in being severed from Christ:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (**John 15:1-2**).

III. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means more than just a casual church member. It requires commitment, especially in regards to: (i) the teachings of Christ, (ii) the love of brethren, and (iii) bearing fruit. The commitment involved is seen further when we consider:

A. Jesus Must Come First:

- Jesus before personal circumstances:

“Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead” (**Matthew 8:18-22**).

- Jesus before anyone else, including members of our own family:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (**Matthew 10:34-37**).

3. Jesus before one's own self:

"And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" (**Luke 9:23-25**).

B. Willing To Suffer For Jesus:

1. Taking up our own cross to follow Him:

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (**Luke 14:27**).

2. Trying to live godly lives in an ungodly world, we may find that following Christ sometimes involves ridicule and persecution:

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

3. Even if we are blessed to escape such things, we must still be willing to expend time and energy in promoting the cause of Christ in positive ways.

C. Forsaking All To Follow Jesus:

1. Having counted the cost:

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (**Luke 14:28-33**).

2. Jesus must be King and Lord of our lives (**Matthew 7:21**).

3. Nothing can take precedent over Him and His will for us (**Matthew 8:18-22; 10:34-37; Luke 9:23-25**).

IV. THE REWARDS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Is the cost of discipleship worth it? I believe so, for consider:

A. Future Blessings:

1. We shall be saved from the wrath of God which is to come:

"Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (**Acts 17:31**).

"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (**Romans 5:9**).

2. We can look forward with joyful anticipation of eternity with God, free from sorrow, pain and death:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (**Revelation 21:1-8**).

B. Present Blessings:

1. Jesus offers peace the world cannot give, to calm the troubled heart (**John 14:27**).
2. His words inspire joy to lift our spirits out of any depression (**John 15:11**).
3. He offers to those who follow Him the abiding love of God, which casts out fear (**John 15:9; 1 John 4:18**).
4. He makes it possible for us to be members of the family of God (**Mark 10:28-30**).
5. Consider, too, all the spiritual blessings in Christ:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (**Ephesians 1:3-14**).

V. THE BEGINNING OF DISCIPLESHIP

Now that we understand the nature of discipleship, its cost and rewards, I hope that we want to be true disciples of Jesus Christ. How does one begin? For the answer we return to our text (Matthew 28:19-20).

A. Discipleship Begins With Hearing The Gospel:

1. The gospel in a nut shell we must believe:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve" (**1 Corinthians 15:1-5**).

2. It is also necessary to repent of one's sins (**Acts 2:38**) and be willing to confess Jesus as Lord (**Romans 10:8-11; Acts 8:35-37**).
3. The stumbling block for many is in obeying the gospel, i.e., being baptised for the remission of sins. This is why we must focus on this in the next section.

B. Discipleship Involves Baptism:

1. Why baptism? - cf. **Mt 28:19**

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (**Matthew 28:19**).

- a. The goal of discipleship is to be like Jesus (**Luke 6:40**). He was holy and sinless (**Hebrews 4:15**), and yet we are to be like Him (**1 John 4:17**). While we are not sinless, we can obtain the forgiveness of our sins.
- b. Baptism is an act of faith which puts us in contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus so we can be forgiven. It is at the point of one's obedience that God forgives one of their sins (cf. **Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4**).
- c. It is also the means by which one "puts on Christ" (**Galatians 3:27**).

2. What is baptism?

- a. Baptism is an act of submission which must be preceded by faith and repentance (**Acts 2:36-38; 8:36-37**). This rules out infant baptism because they are unable to believe and repent.
- b. Baptism is an act of submission which requires one to be submersed in water; it is a burial in water in which one then rises to walk in newness of life through the power of God (**Acts 8:38; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12**). This rules out sprinkling and pouring as modes of baptism because neither of these involve a burial or an immersion in water (which is the meaning of the Greek word “*baptizo*”).
- c. When it is done according to the scriptures, baptism is an act of faith on our part which results in a wonderful working of God in our lives! Our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus (**Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:25-27**), and we are regenerated and renewed by the Spirit of God so we can now live for God! (**Titus 3:5-6**). It is truly a rebirth involving both water and the Spirit (**John 3:5**).

C. Discipleship Includes Further Teaching And Obedience:

1. After baptising believers, Jesus instructed them, saying: (**cf. Matthew 28:20**).

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (**Matthew 28:20**).

2. After those three thousand obeyed the gospel on the Day of Pentecost, the apostles immediately started teaching:

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (**Acts 2:41-42**).

3. As churches began to be established, we see that their purpose was to edify:

“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ**: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body **unto the edifying of itself in love**” (**Ephesians 4:11-16**).

“How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. **Let all things be done unto edifying**” (**1 Corinthians 14:26**).

Conclusion

1. A disciple is one that adheres to a teacher, learns from him, and imitates him. Our goal as disciples of Jesus is to become like Him (**Luke 6:40**).
2. A true disciple of Jesus abides in His word (**John 8:31**), loves the brethren (**John 13:34-35**), and bears much fruit (**John 15:8**).
3. There is a cost in being a disciple of Jesus: Jesus must come first; He must be put first ahead of personal circumstances (**Matthew 8:18-22**), ahead of family (**Matthew 10:34-37**), and before our own selves (**Luke 9:23-25**). We must be willing to suffer for His sake (**Luke 14:27**), and forsake all that we have (**Luke 14:28-33**).
4. The suffering we may endure for Christ's sake is far outweighed by the blessings we receive: future blessings (**Revelation 21:1-8**), and present blessings (**Ephesians 1:3-14**).
5. One who desires to become a disciple of Christ must believe and obey the gospel (**Mark 16:16**).