

You May Believe In Jesus.
You Might Attend Church.
Even So, Ask Yourself...

Are You A Disciple Of Jesus?

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

-- Matthew 28:19-20

The above passage is commonly referred to as “**The Great Commission.**” Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His apostles to make disciples. Are you a disciple?

In this brochure we shall consider what is involved in being a disciple of Jesus Christ. If you are not one now, you will learn how to become one today! Let’s start with...

THE DEFINITION OF DISCIPLESHIP

The word disciple means a **learner**, and denotes one who follows another’s teaching (**Vine’s**). A

disciple was also **an adherent**, thus disciples were spoken of as **imitators** of their teachers.

Jesus stated the goal of a disciple: to become like one’s teacher (**Lk 6:40**). This coincides with God’s goal in the redemption of mankind, that we be conformed to the image of His Son (**Ro 8:29**).

Are you trying to follow Jesus and become like Him? Unless you are, it cannot be said that you are His disciple!

To help further identify a true disciple of Jesus, He gave several distinguishing characteristics...

THE MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

A disciple abides in Jesus’ words - Note what Jesus said to those who believe in Him (**Jn 8:31**). It is not enough that we believe in Jesus. We must abide in His Word. That is, be diligent students of His teachings, and doers of the Word of God (**Mt 7:21-27; Jm 1:21-25**).

A disciple loves the brethren - Consider what Jesus said to His followers (**Jn 13:34-35**). We are to love one another like Jesus loved us, with a love that is visible to others (“by this all will know”).

A disciple bears much fruit - Again, consider Jesus’ words to His disciples (**Jn 15:8**). A true disciple bears much fruit. Not an occasional good deed, but a lifestyle which prompts people to glorify God (**Mt 5:16; 1Pe 2:12**). Failure to bear much fruit results in being severed from Christ (**Jn 15:1-2**)!

A disciple of Jesus means more than just a casual church member. It involves commitment!

The commitment involved is seen further as we consider...

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus must come first - To be a disciple, Jesus must come first, before self (**Lk 9:23-25**), even before family (**Lk 14:25-26; Mt 10:34-37**).

We must be willing to suffer for Jesus - He calls us to take up our cross to follow Him (**Lk 14:27**). Trying to live godly lives in an ungodly world, following Jesus sometimes involves ridicule and persecution (**2Ti 3:12**). 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.

Forsaking all to follow Him - We must count the cost (**Lk 14:28-33**). Nothing can take precedent over Him and His will for us, for He must be the King and Lord of our lives.

This cost of discipleship required by Jesus caused many to turn away from following Him. But Jesus wasn't trying to attract large crowds, He wanted disciples! Is the cost worth it? I believe so, for consider..

THE REWARDS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Future blessings - We shall be saved from the wrath of God which is to come (**Ac 17:31; Ro 5:9**). We can look forward with joyful anticipation of spending eternity with God, free from sorrow, pain and death (**Re 21:1-8**).

Present blessings - Jesus offers a **peace** the world cannot give, to calm the troubled heart (**Jn 14:27**). His words inspire **joy** to lift our

spirits out of depression (**Jn 15:11**). He offers those who follow Him the abiding **love** of God, which casts out fear (**Jn 15:9; 1Jn 4:18**). He makes it possible for us to be members of the **family** of God (**Mk 10:28-30**).

There are many blessings enjoyed by disciples of Jesus; but these suffice to demonstrate that though discipleship is costly, the rewards far exceed the cost!

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 (**Mt 28:19-20**)...

THE BEGINNING OF DISCIPLESHIP

It involves baptism (Mt 28:19) - Why baptism? Remember the goal of discipleship: to be like Jesus. He was holy and sinless, yet we are to be like Him. Baptism is an act of faith which puts us in contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus so we can be forgiven (**Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ro 6:3-4**). It is also the means by which one "puts on Christ" (**Ga 3:27**). So baptism is the logical starting place for true discipleship!

What is baptism? It is an act of submission preceded by faith in Jesus and repentance for our sins (**Ac 2:36-38; 8:36-37**). This precludes infant baptism, since infants are incapable of believing and repenting. It involves a burial in water, in which one then rises to walk in newness of life through the power of God (**Ac 8:38; Ro 6:3-4; Co 2:12**). This precludes sprinkling or pouring as a mode of baptism, for neither involve a burial nor an immersion (the meaning of the Greek word "baptizo").

When done according to the Word of God, baptism is an act of faith which results in a wonderful working of God in our lives! Our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus (**Ac 22:16; Ep 5:25-27**). We are regenerated and renewed by the Spirit of God so we can now live for God (**Ti 3:5-6**). It is truly a rebirth involving both water and the Spirit (**Jn 3:5**)!

It includes further teaching, obedience - Note carefully what follows baptism (**Mt 28:20**). This brings us back to the very definition of discipleship, for Jesus states we are to be **taught** (learners) and to **observe** (adherents or doers). Thus we embark on a life devoted to learning and doing all that Jesus commanded!

Only those scripturally baptized and displaying the marks of discipleship, despite the costs, can truly be called disciples of Jesus! Only they can look forward to the rewards of discipleship, and take comfort in Jesus' promise: "*and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (**Mt 28:20**)

Have you taken the initial steps in becoming a disciple of Jesus (faith, repentance, baptism)? **Are you becoming more like Him** by demonstrating the marks of discipleship in your life? Contact us if we can be of assistance!

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