

# Disciples of the Kingdom

## Introduction

We all understand that we are to be a disciple of Jesus. That is expected of us. However, we have very little understanding of what it *means* to be a disciple. There are entire organizations that create various “discipleship” programs that are promoted as a tool to help us mature by becoming a “disciple” of Jesus. What they consist of are the mechanics of how to study the Bible, how to pray, how to have quiet time with the Lord, and usually end with an admonition to find a “Bible believing Church” and commit yourself to it.

Is this what the Lord meant? If so, He didn't do any of this with His disciples except the how to pray part. Apparently, our idea of what makes a disciple is different than that of Jesus. A disciple is one who learns *disciplines* from another which are incorporated into his lifestyle. This is not just knowledge but an experiential entering into the ways of the one who is teaching by word and example.

## Becoming a Disciple

John tells us the words of Jesus about becoming one of His disciples. Jesus gives us the beginning point, the process and the goal of discipleship.

**John 8:31-32 NASB** So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Only those who believe Jesus can become His disciples. The first requirement after you believe is that you continue or abide in His word. To continue in his Word is to both know it and apply it to our lives. A disciple must become obedient to the Word. This is what makes you a true disciple. As we continue applying the Word to our lives, we come to know the truth. Until we are willing to continue, we are limited in knowing truth. As we come to know the truth, we are set free. The goal of discipleship is for the disciple to be free.

The key to the process is our willingness to continue and be obedient to His Word. The difficulty comes when we don't understand what the Lord is requiring of us or when the Lord's will is at odds with our own desires and knowledge. Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, . . .” (John 7:17 NASB) There are occasions when, in faith, we have to apply His Word to our lives even when we don't understand the reason or meaning. If we willingly continue in His Word even when we encounter hard sayings, we will know the truth and we will be set free.

The “truth” that Jesus is referring to is experiential truth—that part of the truth that we have personally experienced. This is a form of “revealed truth” that only comes through the Holy Spirit. This type of truth is reserved for His disciples.

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 NASB (6) Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; (7) but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; (8) *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; (9) but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (10) For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

Everything that belongs to the Lord is administrated by the Holy Spirit. This is some of the purpose of us receiving the Holy Spirit. He guides us into all of the truth.

John 16:13-15 NASB "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (14) "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (15) "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, only those who are following the Lord. Jesus has purposely hidden some truth so that only disciples, followers, can see it because it is revealed by the Spirit.

Mark 4:10-12 NASB As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables. (11) And He was saying to them, "To you [the followers] **has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside** [outside of the kingdom] **get everything in parables,** (12) **so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.**" [bracketed comments are added]

## Requirements of a Disciple

To continue in His Word is not an easy thing. It requires dying to self and living for the Lord. The goal is to be set free. The question is "Free from what?" We can start to get a picture of what we are to be free from as we look at the requirements of discipleship that Jesus gave.

Luke 14:26-27 NASB "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.

Our relationship with the Lord and our desire to be His disciple has to be stronger than any of our natural relationships, even the closest family relationships. Another way of saying this is that our love of the Lord is so strong that our natural love for our family members or even our own life is as hate by comparison. It is not by accident that the next verses after the ones immediately above deal with being

able to complete what is started. We must be free from the control of family relationships, especially those that would hinder our growth and maturity in the Lord. and even free from our own desires in order to fully follow the Lord.

Jesus makes it very clear when He sums up His requirements:

**Luke 14:33 NKJV** So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

He also gave us several examples of how this would apply to those who would follow Him.

**Luke 9:59-62 NKJV** Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." (60) Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." (61) And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." (62) But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

**Mark 10:21-22 NKJV** Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." (22) But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

So, we can conclude that we are to be *free from the control of things, of activities or duties, and of people*. Until we are free from this type of control, we cannot fulfill all that the Lord may require from us. The work of the Kingdom of God requires that we be free from any entanglements of the world.

It is the process of discipleship that is important for us to complete so “. . . that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,” (**Galatians 1:4 NKJV**).

## Word made flesh

Jesus was the Word made flesh, that is, the Word took on human form and was found as a man. We are to be “conformed to His image”. We are to be like Him. That means that the Word must also become flesh in us. We are to allow the Word to change us, to shape us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the discipleship process that begins to make the Word flesh in us causing us to become more like Jesus.

It is God's desire to bring forth mature sons. Sons that look like Him. Our family resemblance is made evident as we are conformed to the image of Christ. It is through the discipleship process that we are disciplined and trained as sons for the business of the Father, which is the Kingdom of God where the will of God is fully accomplished.

We are being trained to rule with Jesus during His 1000 year reign when He returns to set up the physical Kingdom of God. It is the overcomers, the prepared ones, that will rule with Him.

Revelation 2:26-27 NKJV (26) And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power [lit. authority] over the nations— (27) 'HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON; THEY SHALL BE DASHED TO PIECES LIKE THE POTTER'S VESSELS'— as I also have received from My Father; [bracketed comments are added]

Revelation 3:21 NKJV To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Much of the teaching that we have received in the past has been weak without the power necessary to train us. Somehow it has been presented to us that if we can just make it to heaven everything will be all right, that we all receive the same thing. That is simply not true. Remember the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:13-27). One received the rule over ten cities and another received the rule over five cities and another received no rule at all but is called a worthless slave. That is certainly not an equality. Does anyone truly think that we can rule with Jesus, judging the nations, without having gone through any preparation or be proven faithful in this life?

The ones that rule, the overcomers, are those who have walked in *the way*, received and implemented *the truth*, and have experienced *the life* of the Lord Jesus. They have become mature sons of God. They have done business with what the Lord has given and presented back to Him an increase.

## Students or Disciples

Our society, even our so-called *Christian* society, has replaced being a disciple with being a student. The student gains knowledge but not necessarily understanding. The disciple receives truth and experientially applies truth to his own life. He *lives* what he *learns*.

We can become students of the Kingdom and learn all about the Kingdom. We can develop doctrines of the Kingdom and know all the requirements of the Kingdom but never *enter* the Kingdom. The Kingdom is entered into experientially. The student must become the disciple in order to mature.

Matthew 13:51-52 NASB "Have you understood all these things?" They \*said to Him, "Yes." (52) And Jesus said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

A student instructed concerning the Kingdom is a disciple who participates in the life of the Kingdom and becomes like the head of a household, that is, he begins to function according to “headship” principles. He can bring out of his treasure things both new and old. He not only teaches about the Kingdom, he also demonstrates the Kingdom.

A scribe was a “professional” that copied documents. His contribution was in just reproducing manuscripts that were already written. He was not permitted to add his own thoughts or record opinions or even add words to clarify a passage. His function was as a copyist and not as an originator of thoughts.

However, once he becomes a disciple of the Kingdom he becomes as the head of a household with headship understanding (mature, functional understanding) and a possessor of revelation. Then he can bring out of his *own* treasure both *things new and old*. He moves from being a copyist to being an originator of thoughts and being able to put the scriptures together by the revelation of the Spirit and teach things both new and old. As the head of the household he has learned a different perspective.

A student of the Kingdom is graded on his knowledge, what he knows. A disciple of the Kingdom is graded on his obedience, what he does. A student *learns* while a disciple *does*. It is disciples who become heads of households. The Lord is after disciples not students.