

A Biblical Profile of a Disciple

1. A disciple is a learner—open and teachable.
Proverbs 9:8-10; Matthew 4:19; John 6:60-66
2. A disciple puts Christ first in all areas of his life.
Matthew 6:9-13, 24, 33; Luke 9:23; John 13:13; 2 Corinthians 5:15
3. A disciple is committed to life of purity and is taking steps to separate from sin.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 4:22-5:5; Colossians 3:5-10; Titus 2:12-14;
1 Thessalonians 4:3-7
4. A disciple has a daily devotional time and is developing in his prayer life.
Psalm 27:4; 42:1-2; Mark 1:35; Luke 11:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; James 1:5-7; 5:16
5. A disciple demonstrates faithfulness and a desire to learn and apply the Word of God through hearing it preached and taught, reading it frequently, Bible study, Scripture memory, and meditation on the Scriptures.
John 8:31; Acts 2:42; 17:11; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15
6. A disciple has a heart for witnessing, gives his testimony clearly, and presents the gospel regularly with increasing skill.
Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 5:42; 14:21-23; 22:14-15; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4;
1 Thessalonians 2:4
7. A disciple attends church regularly to worship God, to have his spiritual needs met, and to make a contribution to the body of believers.
Psalm 122:1; Acts 16:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 10:25
8. A disciple fellowships regularly with other believers, displaying love and unity.
John 17:22-26; Acts 2:44-47; 4:31-33; Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 10:24; John 1:1-3
9. A disciple demonstrates a servant heart by helping others in practical ways.
Mark 10:42-45; Acts 6:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 2:25-30; 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9
10. A disciple gives regularly and honors God with his finances.
Haggi 1:6-9; Malachi 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philemon 14
11. A disciple demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit by an attractive relationship with Christ and his fellow man.
Acts 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Peter 2:18-23; 1 Peter 1:5-8

*Francis M. Cosgrove, Jr., Essentials of Discipleship

DISCIPLESHIP

The discipline of discipleship is the simplest of all the habits of the spiritual life, yet at the same time, it is the most demanding. The word "disciple" means follower. To accept the call to discipleship means that the one who believes in Jesus will become a follower of Jesus.

The New Testament is the witness of God's nature and truth as revealed in Jesus Christ. Paul reminded the Christians in Ephesus that we are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone." The cornerstone is not an institution, not a creed, and not a set of rituals, the foundation is Jesus himself. The invitation of the Christian faith is to profess faith in Jesus, and then to become his disciple.

Spiritual growth in this generation await a host of professing Christians who will practice the discipline of discipleship in all human relationships. Let us look carefully at the passages in the Gospel record which tell us what it means to be a disciple.

FIRST

It is said that Jesus chose disciples "to be with him." It was by being with him that they were able to understand his mission, his life of prayer, his teachings of the Kingdom, and the necessity of his Cross. The deepest insights into truth which were revealed by the Master during his earthly ministry were given to those who were his closest followers, and not to the crowds. To be a disciple of Jesus today is to unlock the spiritual treasures which often remain unrecognized by the world.

SECOND

Jesus said, "If any one serves me, he must follow me." (John 12:26) The appeal of the Master to "follow me" is given to all who are willing to respond to his challenge. When we become a disciple, an immediate change is required in many of our ways of thinking and living. We learn of the need for silent mediation before God; we learn of new attitudes toward people; we learn how to forgive even those who are most unworthy; we learn to labor and hope for the Kingdom.

THIRD

Jesus declared that discipleship creates the possibility that we will be like him. He said, "Every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40) Any person who thinks scornfully that the Christian faith is an escape from life may well pause in amazement before the invitation of Jesus for men to be like him. He did not point the way for others to follow. He invites us to be his disciples by being the kind of person he himself was.

Such an invitation would leave even the most saintly Christian in despair if he felt he had to achieve this goal by his own striving. But as God revealed himself in Christ, so God provides power for the eager seeker to be like his Master. The practice of this discipline involves God's interest and continuing help.

FOURTH

Jesus suggested that a disciple will face hardships. He said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) It is sometimes difficult to admit that discipleship makes suffering and sacrifice a necessary part of life everyday. Jesus was wise in the ways of human nature. He knew that his followers would be tempted to assume a life of ease and comfort as the reward for their devotion.

Without a cross we can never understand the heartbreak of God in the presence of human sin. Without a cross we can never understand the suffering of others.

Karl Barth is one of the leading theologians of the twentieth century. In a recent interview he declared, "If we want to get out of this dead end, we must look back to the origins of the church." We must all become disciples. We begin the adventure of discipleship when the desires of self are made subordinate to the higher call of duty and obligation.

There ought to be no distinction between a believing Christian and a practicing Christian. But too often there is such a distinction. The REAL Christ committed person becomes a discipline of discipleship.

Let us examine several principles which characterize a disciple in the twentieth century.

FIRST

The disciple endeavors to gain an intimate knowledge of Jesus as he is revealed in the Gospels. Jesus invited disciples "to be with him." More is involved than facts about Jesus' life and ministry. The disciple lives with Jesus, noticing his attitudes toward people, and learning from him the secrets of the deeper life of faith.

There is a book about the life of Jesus which is titled, "The Eternal Contemporary." The author suggests that Jesus is as significant to an understanding of life in the atomic age as he was in the first century. His teachings and attitudes are universal. Long before psychology was developed as the science of the mind, Jesus demonstrated a knowledge of the human mind and heart which has never been surpassed. Notice his love for people as suggested in his relationships with Mary Magdalene, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the Rich Young Ruler, and most of all with the Twelve. Go with him when he climbs the hillside to pray. Share with the twelve the growing conviction that he is the Son of God. Listen to his answers to questions which are as pressing in our day as they were his.

SECOND

The disciple learns from Jesus the secret of prayer. When you become aware of the amazing power of prayer in his life you will join the Twelve in their request: "Teach us to pray." When you feel that something is wrong with your prayer life, you will go to the Master to learn how you may commune with your Heavenly Father.

The request of the Twelve came in the early morning after Jesus had spent all night in fellowship with his Father. Before he left them, they knew he was weary and worn. In the morning hour they found him restored in strength by prayer. No wonder they cried out, "Lord teach us to pray."

The disciple in our day will always feel unworthy and inadequate when he compares his prayer life with that of Jesus. But the discipline of discipleship has its rewards. You will not pray like Jesus, but you will learn from him secrets of prayer which cannot be gained in any other way.

THIRD

The disciple learns to test every decision and attitude by asking the question: "What would Jesus have me do?" The tensions which arise with others in our family, our work, or in the world at large are effectively clarified when we earnestly inquire what Jesus would want us to do.

FOURTH

The disciple opens his life daily to the inflowing power of the Divine Presence. The victorious life of the early church cannot be explained apart from the indwelling spirit of Christ in the lives of his followers. In the joy and strength of that Presence common and ordinary men went out to change their world.....

CAN WE CHANGE OURS?