

**Subject: *Being a Disciple of Christ***

**Scripture: *Luke 9:23-27***

Jesus was not like the professional ministers or clergy of His day. He did not fit the mold of formal Jewish religion. His ministry consisted very simply of calling men to follow Him. There were no high-powered programs, no big-time attractions, and no entertainment...just a handful of dedicated followers. The people who followed Jesus were close to Him. They learned His doctrine, understood His values, and followed His example. After He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended back into Heaven, He told them to continue making disciples to follow Him and His teachings.

**Matthew 28:18-20** <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. <sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: <sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

The phrase “teach all nations” (vs. 19) means “make disciples of all nations.” A disciple is a learner, one who learns by following and being with His Master. This is our assignment until the end of the age, making disciples or followers of Christ. At the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in Parris Island there is a large sign over the main road that says: “We Make Marines.” We could put a sign over the front doors of this church: “We make disciples of Christ.” That is our business—to make disciples.

You would think by now the church would understand our mission, but there is still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about being a disciple. Some think that being a disciple is optional. First, you become a believer in Christ, and then if you want to take it to a higher level, you decide to become a disciple. Jesus called to be disciples, not just believers. Some think that disciples were the twelve men who were with Jesus in His ministry. Those twelve men were disciples, but they had a special calling and they came to be known as apostles (sent ones). Jesus had twelve apostles, but He had many disciples. All the apostles were also disciples, but all disciples were not apostles.

We need to understand that every believer and every Christian is a disciple. In the Book of Acts the word “disciple” is used as a synonym for believer. **Acts 11:26**...*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* Disciples are people who believe in Christ and their faith in Christ causes them to obey what He commands. Remember what the Bible teaches: “Faith without works is dead.” Believers are obedient followers. Any distinction between believers and disciples is artificial and not Biblical. Thinking that you can be a believer without being a disciple leads to a form of counterfeit faith that rejects the hard demands of Christ. This kind of thinking is common in our churches, and it is misleading and deadly. What did Jesus really say? What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?

### **1. Being a disciple involves *self-denial and sacrifice for Christ***

The world says to fulfill yourself. Jesus says to deny yourself. He said to take up your cross. When Jesus said that, people knew what it meant. He wasn’t talking about a piece of jewelry or a lapel pin. He was talking about an instrument of death. He was talking to people who witnessed crucifixions as a method of execution. His statement doesn’t fit a casual and comfortable approach to Christianity. Jesus was not interested in meeting the felt needs of his audience and building a huge crowd. To take up your cross doesn’t mean enduring a difficult

situation or a terrible disease or even putting up with a nagging spouse or unruly children. It means dying to self for Christ's sake. Being a disciple begins at a point in time, but it is a lifelong process. We are to take up our cross *daily*. **John 8:31** *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.* **John 6:66** *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* These were false disciples and they proved that when they stopped following Him.

This runs directly opposite to the world's way of thinking and living (vs. 24-25). We end up losing our life if we try to save it for ourselves. We save our life by losing it for Christ's sake. If we could end up with everything in this world and lose our soul by not following Christ, it would be a bad deal.

The test of our self-denial and sacrifice is to be willing to suffer with Him, and not be ashamed of Him. This doesn't mean that we will always stand up for the Lord. Peter denied Him three times. Timothy was afraid and Paul had to tell him not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (2 Tim. 1:8). We have all failed to confess Christ more than we would like to admit. But a temporary failure doesn't disqualify us as disciples. If we are true disciples, we will not intentionally keep our faith hidden from other people all the time. We will stand up and be counted as followers of Christ no matter what it costs.

See **Luke 9:57-62**. In this passage Jesus talks with three prospective disciples. The first man was an impulsive follower. The second was a reluctant follower. The third was a half-hearted follower. Jesus wanted each of these men to know the cost of being His disciple. There was no fine print in the contract.

John Stott has written about what he calls "the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called 'nominal Christianity'."

*"Large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin, veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism."* - John Stott

Jesus did not offer a soft cushion. He did not offer a life of convenience and protection from the hard unpleasantness of life. A disciple is not one who simply gets fire insurance, who accepts Christ just to escape hell. A disciple is someone who follows Christ by denying self and dying daily.

## **2. Being a disciple requires supreme devotion to Christ**

See **Luke 14:25-35**. Jesus said His followers must love Him more than any person, more than any purpose, and more than any possession. He said we should count the cost to follow Him.

## **3. Being a disciple provides ultimate satisfaction from Christ**

See **Luke 18:18-30**. The parallel text is Matthew 19:27-29.

Peter voiced his concern (vs. 28). He spoke on behalf of all the disciples: "Lord, we have already done what you required of the rich young ruler. What can we expect to gain for our

faith and obedience?" What Peter said was true, but it was not wise. Spurgeon said: "What shall we have?" is a question which we need not raise, for we ought rather to think of what we have already received at our Lord's hands. He is reward enough to the soul that hath him." As the psalm states, "the LORD is our portion."

Christ made a promise (vs. 29-30). Jesus did not rebuke Peter for his question, but gave him hope and encouragement. Christ gave this reassurance to those who followed him, the mark of true disciples.

What would you say if someone asks you: "Are you a disciple of Christ?"

Are you denying self and is your life a daily sacrifice for Christ?  
Are you devoted to Christ above all people and things?  
Are you looking to Christ for your greatest satisfaction now and when you see Him?

We sing a beautiful song called *Wherever He Leads I'll Go*.

*Take up thy cross and follow Me, I heard my Master say  
I gave my life to ransom thee, surrender your all today*

*He drew me closer to His side, I sought His will to know,  
And in that will I now abide, Wherever He leads I'll go.*

*My heart, my life, my all I bring to Christ who loves me so;  
He is my Master, Lord, and King, wherever He leads I'll go.*

*Wherever He leads I'll go, wherever He leads I'll go;  
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so, wherever He leads I'll go.*