

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 16 of 32

DISCIPLESHIP

Definition of a disciple: a learner and/or follower of another person.

Definition of a Christian disciple: a believer in Jesus Christ who is striving to learn of Him, follow Him, and progressively become more like Him.

The suffix "ship" means: an office or profession.

The word "discipleship" therefore, means the office or profession of striving to learn of Jesus Christ, follow Him, and progressively become more like Him.

We learned in Lesson Fourteen that we have many different relationships with Jesus Christ. The beginning relationship is that of a "believer."

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14).

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17).



A true believer is one who has heard and accepted the truth. He has experienced far more than just "accepting Jesus Christ" as his personal Saviour. He has been baptized in Jesus' name (Mark 16:16), and because his belief or faith is of a scriptural nature, he has received the Holy Ghost:

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly (inner being) shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

Not all believers develop into disciples as we can see by the below verse of Scripture: *"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).*

A disciple is a believer, but a believer may not be a disciple!

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE DISCIPLE

1. They live a disciplined life. Both words (disciple and discipline) come from the same Latin root word "discipulus."

2. They are learners of Jesus: ". . . learn of me . . ." (Matthew 11:29).

3. They bear much fruit of the Spirit: *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).*

4. They love one another to the extent that they are willing to die for one another: *"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).*

5. They love Jesus Christ more than any earthly person: *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).*

6. They are willing to bear their cross and follow Jesus: *"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:27).

7. They are willing to forsake all to follow Jesus: *"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:33).

8. They have made Jesus their Lord and Master (John 13:13).

9. They are willing to suffer for Jesus Christ: *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"* (I Peter 2:21-24).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him . . ." (II Timothy 2:12).

10. They are not following Him just for signs and wonders: *"And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased"* (John 6:2).

11. They are not just following Him for material benefits: *". . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled"* (John 6:26).

12. They are following Jesus because of who He is: *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John 6:66-68). *ds*

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