

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS?

Matthew 28:18-20

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Jesus left a "command" to His followers shortly before He ascended to heaven and it has since been called "The Great Commission." To make disciples is the main thrust of His command, to evangelize the world. Being a disciple is more than just being a believer, so just exactly what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

I. WHAT EXACTLY IS A "DISCIPLE?"

1. The word Jesus used is "disciple:"
 - "Disciple" means to be a learner.
 - It means in modern terms "one who follows another's teaching."
 - A disciple is a learner, but also an adherent.
 - The disciples of Jesus were said to be imitators of Jesus, thus "disciple" means to imitate a teacher.
2. The goal of being a disciple:
 - Jesus stated it clearly and it is to be like the one teaching - Luke 6:40
 - To be a disciple of Jesus, it is to strive to be like Him.
 - Paul used the term of "being conformed to the image of His Son" - Romans 8:29
 - Are YOU a disciple of Jesus? Do you strongly desire to follow and be like Jesus?

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE

1. A disciple of Jesus is one who abides (lives) in Jesus' words - John 8:31
 - One who is a diligent student of Jesus' teachings.
 - One who is a "doer" of God's Word - Matthew 7:21-27; James 1:21-25
 - A disciple of Jesus would not:
 - fail to study the bible diligently.
 - deliberately refrain from opportunities to study the bible with others (classes, etc).
2. A disciple is one who loves his/her fellow Christians - John 13:34-35
 - There would be a love patterned after Jesus's kind of love (as I have loved you...)
 - There would be a love that is clearly visible to everyone else (that all may know...)
 - A disciple would:
 - make every effort to get to know his/her fellow Christians
 - take advantage of opportunities to encourage and grow closer to his/her fellow Christians.
 - He/she is one who wants to become just like his/her teacher.
 - Jesus was always willing to sacrifice time and effort for His disciples.
 - If one is going to be a true disciple, then he/she will also make time for other Christians.
3. Being a disciple of Jesus is more than being a casual church member for it requires commitment:
 - To the teachings of Jesus.
 - To love one's fellow Christians.
 - To bear fruit to the glory of God.

III. THERE IS A COST IN BEING A DISCIPLE

1. Jesus must come first - Luke 14:26
 - Before anyone else, even one's family members - Matthew 10:34-37

- Even before one's own self - Luke 9:23-25
- 2. One must be willing to suffer for Jesus - Luke 14:27
 - In trying to live a godly life in today's world, will/can bring ridicule and persecution - 2 Timothy 3:12
 - One must be willing to spend the time and effort in promoting the cause of Jesus in positive ways.
- 3. One must forsake ALL to follow Jesus - Luke 14:33
 - Jesus must be "King and Lord" of one's life.
 - Nothing can precede over Jesus and His will for a person.
 - Sadly, the high cost of being a disciple of Jesus causes many to turn away from being a disciple.
 - Is the cost worth it?

IV. THERE ARE REWARDS IN BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

1. There is the promise of "future blessings:"
 - One will be saved from the wrath of God which is yet to come upon the world - Romans 5:9
 - One can look forward with joyful anticipation of eternity with God and the benefits of being free from sorrow, pain and death - Revelation 21:1-8
2. There are "present blessings" as well:
 - Jesus gives a peace that the world cannot give that calms one's troubled heart - John 14:27
 - Jesus' words inspire joy to lift one's spirits out of any depression - John 15:11
 - Jesus offers His disciples the abiding love of God which casts out fear - John 15:9; 1 John 4:18
 - Jesus makes it possible for a disciple to be a member of the family of God - Matthew 10:28-30

V. HOW BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS BEGINS

1. Becoming a disciple of Jesus involves baptism - Matthew 28:19
 - Why baptism?
 - The goal of being a disciple is to be like Jesus.
 - Jesus was holy and sinless, yet a disciple is still to be like Jesus.
 - Baptism is an act of faith which brings one into contact with Jesus' cleansing blood and so one can be forgiven - Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4
 - It is also the way one "puts on Christ." Galatians 3:27
 - What is baptism?
 - It is an act of immersion which is preceded by faith in Jesus and repentance of one's sins.
 - Acts 2:36-38; 8:36-37
 - No such thing as infant baptism for they are incapable of believing and repenting.
 - It is an act of submission which involves burial in water of which one then rises to walk in newness of life through God's power. Acts 8:38; Romans 6:3-4 Colossians 2:12
 - Baptism is not sprinkling or pouring water.
 - Baptism is a BURIAL, an IMMERSION (baptidzo)
 - Done according to God's word, baptism becomes an act of faith by the believer.
 - One's sins are washed away by Jesus' blood - Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:25-27
 - One is regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit so he/she can then live for God.
 - Titus 3:5-6
 - Baptism is truly a REBIRTH involving water and the Holy Spirit - John 3:5

2. Teaching and obedience then follows baptism - Matthew 28:20
 - Teaching and obedience are two terms that clearly define discipleship.
 - Jesus clearly stated:
 - One is to be taught (for he/she is a learner)
 - One is to watch, observe and then follow and do what has been observed/seen.
 - A disciple is one whose life is devoted to learning and doing all that Jesus commands.

CONCLUSION:

1. Only a scriptural "baptism" and demonstrating signs (marks) of discipleship despite the costs, can one be truly called a disciple of Jesus.
2. Only a true disciple can actually look forward to the rewards of being a disciple and take consolation in what Jesus said: *"...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age..."* Matthew 28:20
3. Are YOU a genuine, true disciple of Jesus Christ? If not DO YOU WANT TO BE? Are you willing to pay the cost?