

Key Characteristics of a Disciple

Romans 10:11-15

PW Emerson – 3/15/2020 – Ten:27 Ministries

We are doing a series on discipleship, looking at what it means for us to be disciples of Christ, based on what we see in the Bible.

Today we are looking at 3 key characteristics of a disciple.

Our whole goal is to lead people to fall in love with God.

- Not to make them better people
- Not to make them better Christians

But to help them to better know the awesome power and intimacy of God's love, and that will radically change their hearts and lives.

The word "disciple" is used in the gospels and in Acts to refer to the Twelve; the dozen men whom Jesus selected to travel with him, those whom He chose to teach and train personally.

"Disciple" is also used in the Bible and today as a synonym for "Christian". It means "follower," or "student". So when we refer to Christians as disciples, we are identifying them as followers of Jesus Christ; as students of his life and teachings.

But there's something more. The word also carries the idea of imitation. So disciples of Jesus Christ are those who are seeking, not just to understand Christianity in an intellectual sense, but who are seeking to be like Jesus.

Disciples of Christ are people who are modeling their lives after his, who are walking according to the example he gave us.

Romans 10:11-15

¹¹As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."¹²Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

¹⁴But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

The writer, Paul, gives us 3 characteristics that are key for all disciples.

I SET AN EXAMPLE

Verse 11

Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.

He is calling attention to Isaiah 28:16

Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem,

a firm and tested stone.

It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on.

Whoever believes need never be shaken.

As people who are trying to lead others to Christ, we have to be living on faith.

We have to trust in God.

People see how we are living our lives and THAT makes a bigger statement than anything we say.

We have to set the example.

Illustration – people see the real you

A rather pompous deacon was endeavoring to impress upon a class of boys the importance of living the Christian life. "Why do people call me a Christian?" the man asked. After a moment's pause, one youngster said, "Maybe it's because they don't know you."

I Corinthians 11:1 same author ...

¹Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

One of my favorite people in the New Testament is Timothy:

- He was a young guy, most likely in his teens when he was led to Christ by Paul
- He was so excited by the message of God's love that he soaked up everything he could
- He became a leader of the church in his area

- And Paul built up Timothy to be a leader in the church

One of the most common verses used in youth ministry is a verse in a letter Paul wrote to Timothy, encouraging him, building him up more as a disciple of Christ and leader in the church.

I Timothy 4:12

¹²Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

Illustration on Example

One Sunday morning in 1865, a black man entered a fashionable church in Richmond, Virginia. When Communion was served, he walked down the aisle and knelt at the altar. A rustle of resentment swept the congregation. How dare he! After all, believers in that church used the common cup. Suddenly a distinguished layman stood up, stepped forward to the altar, and knelt beside the black man. With Robert E. Lee setting the example, the rest of the congregation soon followed his lead.

Today in the Word, September, 1991, p. 15.

You and I need to set the example ...

- How we live our lives
- How we love our neighbor

In everything we do!

II ALWAYS BE LEARNING MORE

Paul also wrote ...

I Timothy 4:7-8

train yourself to be godly. ^aFor physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Physical training is a perfect metaphor.

Let's say you've worked out for months to reach the goals you've set ...

- Your body is in great shape
- You've got great energy
- Everything is just right

So you stop working out.

Right?????? WRONG!

If you stop working out, your body will fall out of shape quickly!

You have to keep working out to maintain your body!

More important than physical training is spiritual training.

We are never done.

We are always learning more

- About God
- God's love
- God's desires for us
- God's grace
- God's mercy

- God's forgiveness
- how we can serve God ...

Pastor John – in his 70s, has 3 master's degrees – continues to learn more!

I'm always

- reading books
- listening to sermons

I continue to be amazed at the lessons God reveals to me!

As I grow, go into different stages in life, I will encounter different challenges.

God continues to teach me what I need to know!

Just as the glory of youth is beauty and strength; so the glory of age is wisdom and knowledge.

Job 32:7

I thought, 'Age should speak;
advanced years should teach wisdom.'

Attaining wisdom isn't just a matter of time passing. We don't become mature just by living a certain number of years. You don't suddenly wake up on your 60th or 70th birthday and find that you've become wise.

Those years have to be spent in the study and application of the truth, otherwise, you'll just end up an old fool.

So if you want to be a respected source of instruction and counsel as you grow older, then you have to be seeking God now, and all throughout your life.

Think about Deuteronomy 7:22

²²The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you.

Just as God allowed Joshua and the Israelites to possess the land “little by little,” he uses a gradual process of change to develop us into the image of Christ.

There are no shortcuts to maturity.

It is a process.

Although we have instant coffee and instant potatoes, there is no such thing as instant spiritual maturity.

When Billy Graham turned 75, he was asked, if he had 3 years left to live, what would he do? He said he would spend 2 years studying and 1 year teaching.

By its very definition, disciples are students and as such we need to be always learning about God.

III REACH OUT

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵And how will

anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

Disciples of Christ reach out. Always.

You might say, "Well, I'm just not a teacher. That's not my gift."

That may be true.

Perhaps God hasn't called you to stand before a group of people and explain the Scriptures.

But maybe God has called you to teach on a one-to-one basis.

You can call that

- counseling
- exhortation
- or just being an encourager

But God has called you to build up the other members of the body by sharing with them

- your knowledge
- your insights
- your experiences

Colossians 3:16

¹⁶Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

There is no mistake that in Christianity, there is a piece referred to as the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We see the same thing at Mark 16:15

¹⁵He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Jesus is talking to God in John 17:18

⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

Referring to his disciples, including us.

He is telling his disciples to GO and make more disciples of Christ.

If we are disciples of Christ, we need to be doing the same.

Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, recalls:

"My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher, and he related how his master used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke and was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that our he was cured of his lameness."

When we tell the story of our Master, we too experience His power.

CONCLUSION

Let me make one more point before we close. If a disciple is a "follower," and we are disciples of Christ, it follows that we are willing to be led.

We are willing to be led into places that we don't understand; even places that are dark, and scary, and painful, and unpleasant; because we trust the one we are following.

We are like sheep who trust and follow their shepherd

G.C. Morgan wrote:

"There can be no doubt that these men, Peter, James, and John, were the most remarkable in the apostolate. Peter loved Him; John He loved; James was the first to seal his testimony with his blood. Even their blunders proved their strength. They were the men of enterprise; men who wanted thrones and places of power...Mistaken ideas, all of them, and yet proving capacity for holding the keys and occupying the throne. What men from among that first group reign today as these men?

On four special occasions, Jesus admitted them to experiences from which they learned precious lessons.

- On the occasion of the raising of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:51), they were granted a preview of their Lord's mastery over death ...
- On the mount of transfiguration (Matt 17:1), they gained clearer insight into the importance of His impending death ...
- On the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:3), they marveled at His prophetic discernment ...

- In the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:37), they glimpsed in the sufferings of the Savior something of the cost of their salvation..."

J.O. Sanders, *Enjoying Intimacy with God*, Moody, p. 19.

The more you serve God as a Disciple of Christ, the more you will grow close to God and God will reveal more to you!