

CHAPTER 6

SEVEN ATTRIBUTES OF A DISCIPLE

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

To many Christians, the word "disciple" is a religious term to describe the original twelve followers of Jesus. Most Christians probably would not associate themselves with being a disciple of Jesus. However, the word disciple is the Greek word, "*mathaytes*." It is the Strong's word 3101. The word translated as disciple which is the Greek word, "*mathaytes*," means "a pupil, a learner, a student." In fact, in several places in the Gospels, Jesus is called Rabbi. The word "Rabbi" means "a teacher." We can see this in *John 3:2* as it is written:

"The same (Nicodemus) came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God ..."

Jesus is described in the Gospels as being a Rabbi or "teacher" (*John 1:38, John 3:2*) and His followers are called disciples or "students." A disciple or "student" is expected to learn and grow in knowledge and understanding. By doing so, one day he will become qualified to become the teacher of other disciples (students). A disciple of Jesus is a student of God's Word and knows and understands the Word of God and the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven. We can see this principle in *Hebrews 5:12-14* as it is written:

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers (having grown from disciples/students to teachers) ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk (a student), and not of strong meat (a teacher). For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age (spiritually mature or teachers) even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

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From these things, we can see that AFTER you become saved by accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you become a disciple (student) of Jesus and a disciple (student) of God's Word and the ways of the Kingdom of God. By studying and showing yourself approved (*II Timothy 2:15*), a disciple (student) grows to spiritual maturity and is qualified to become a teacher of God's Word to other disciples (students).

WHAT IS THE GREAT COMMISSION?

When many Christians think of the "great commission," they associate the "great commission" with preaching the Gospel message of salvation to unbelievers. This message of salvation consists of preaching that Jesus shed His blood on the cross so that we can be forgiven of our sins and by receiving Him into our hearts and life, you will be saved and go to heaven. While it is true if you believe the Gospel message that Jesus shed His blood on the cross so that you can be forgiven of your sins and by making a decision to repent of your sins and receive Jesus into your heart and life that you will go to heaven, this is not the FULLNESS of fulfilling the "great commission." Let us examine more closely what is the "great commission" according to Jesus. In *Matthew 28:19-20* it is written:

"Go ye therefore and teach (make disciples of) all nations ... teaching (making students) them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.."

This commandment of Jesus has NEVER been fulfilled. While many around the world have heard about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and that He shed His blood on the cross to forgive us of our sins and by repenting of our sins and receiving Him into our heart and life we will go to heaven, the world is far from being disciples (students) of God's Word and the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven. The great commission will not be fulfilled until the Messianic Age when Jesus Himself will rule and reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years. At that time, the followers of Jesus will go forth and make disciples (students) of all nations. This truth can be seen in *Isaiah 2:2-3* as it is written:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Therefore, we can see that the goal of Christianity as defined by Jesus when He gave the "great commission" is not just to make converts to Christianity but to make converts and

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disciples (students) of all nations on the earth.

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Now that we know that a disciple is a follower of Jesus and a student of God's Word, what are the characteristics of a disciple of Jesus? I will list seven characteristics of a disciple of Jesus. They are as follows:

1. A disciple (student) will be like his master (teacher) (*Luke 6:40*)
2. A disciple (student) must lay down his "psuche/soulish" life to obtain "zoe" life (*Luke 14:26*)
3. A disciple (student) must bear his own cross (*Luke 14:27*)
4. A disciple (student) will forsake all he has and deny himself to serve Jesus (*Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:33*)
5. A disciple (student) will bear much fruit (*John 15:8*)
6. A disciple (student) will have love one for another (*John 13:34-35*)
7. A disciple (student) will continue in God's Word (*John 8:32*)

A DISCIPLE WILL BE LIKE HIS MASTER

If you have accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, Jesus is your master (teacher) and we are his disciples (students). The desire of every teacher is for their students to grow in knowledge and understanding of their subject material so that they will be able to comprehend the subject material on the same level as their teacher. The Bible talks about believers in Jesus as Messiah growing in knowledge and understanding of Him and God's Word so that we will be conformed to His image. In *Romans 8:29* it is written:

"For whom he (God) did foreknow, he (God) also did predestinate to be conformed to the image (the exact spiritual likeness and characteristics) of his Son (Jesus) ..."

We are conformed to the image of Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In *II Corinthians 3:18* it is written:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

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God gave the fivefold ministry in the church so that believers can grow from disciples (students) to spiritual maturity (teachers). By doing so, God desired that we grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In *Ephesians 4:11, 13* it is written:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers ... Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

From these things, we can see that a disciple (student) is required to grow up to be like his master (teacher). These were the words of Jesus in *Luke 6:40* as it is written:

"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."

A DISCIPLE WILL LAY DOWN HIS OWN LIFE

Secondly, a disciple (student) will lay down his life to become like his master (teacher). With study comes sacrifice. In order to get good grades in school, it is required to spend much time studying. In order to study to get good grades, you must sometimes sacrifice having fun with your friends. In doing this, you are laying aside the desires of the flesh (to have fun) to pursue a higher goal of getting a good grade. In the same way, disciples (students) of Jesus are required to lay aside the desires of the flesh and the ways of the world (the (psuche/soulish) life) to pursue the higher goal of pleasing our Heavenly Father so that we may grow to full spiritual maturity. This is a characteristic of a disciple (student) of Jesus. Jesus told us this truth in *Luke 14:26* as it is written:

"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 (psuche = 5590) also, he cannot be my disciple."

This scripture is not telling us to hate our parents and our family. But Jesus is saying that if you put your desires of your parents and family above the will of God for your life, then you cannot be His disciple. In an earlier chapter in this book, we learned that the "life" Jesus is talking about in *Luke 14:26* is the Greek word "psuche/soulish" life that is influenced by the ways of the world and the desires of the flesh. The "psuche/soulish" life is contrary to the will of God.

In *Matthew 10:39* it is written:

"He that findeth his life (psuche) shall lose it: and he that loseth his life (psuche) for my sake shall find it."

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In *John 12:25* it is written:

"He that loveth his life (psuche) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (psuche) in this world shall keep it unto life (zoe) eternal."

In order to die on the cross, Jesus had to first lay down his (psuche) life. Jesus laid down his (psuche) life before He died on the cross by submitting His (psuche) life to the will of God the Father. In *John 10:17* it is written:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life (psuche) that I may take it again."

Jesus submitted to the will of God and made His decision to lay down His (psuche) life at the Garden of Gethsemane. In *Matthew 26:36, 38-39* it is written:

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane ... Then saith he (Jesus) unto them (the disciples), my soul (psuche) is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed saying, O my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Therefore, we can see that if a disciple (student) of Jesus will seek to be as His master, He will lay down his self-will life to do God's Will in his life.

A DISCIPLE MUST BEAR HIS OWN CROSS

What does it mean to bear your own cross? Our own cross represents anything in life that would keep us from becoming a disciple (student) of Jesus and growing to full spiritual maturity. In the parable of the sower, Jesus tells us five things which keep us from taking up our own cross and following Him with all our heart. In *Mark 4:17-19*, these five things are as follows:

1. Affliction
2. Persecution
3. Cares of this world
4. Deceitfulness of riches
5. Lusts of other things

In *Luke 14:27* it is written:

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"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

Jesus spoke these words in *Luke 9:23* as it is written:

"And he (Jesus) said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

In order to take up our cross, we must be willing to be crucified. What does it mean to take up your cross and be willing to be crucified? The cross that we must take up is laying down our (psuche) life and not be a servant to sin. In *Romans 6:6* it is written:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

In *Galatians 2:20* it is written:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Therefore, a true disciple (student) of Jesus will be like his master. He will lay down his (psuche) life, not be a servant to sin, and put away all those things that stand between him and his personal relationship with God and doing His will for your life.

A DISCIPLE WILL FORSAKE ALL TO SERVE JESUS

A true disciple (student) of Jesus will lay aside the cares of this world and forsake them all to be a disciple (student) of Jesus and serve Him with all his heart, mind, soul and strength. In *Luke 14:33*, Jesus spoke these words as it is written:

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

In order to forsake all to serve Jesus, you cannot love the world, the ways of the world, and the cares of the world. In *1 John 2:15* it is written:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

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By not loving the things of this world, the ways of this world, and the cares of this world, you will not only be a disciple (student) of Jesus but you will also be a good soldier in the army of God. In *2 Timothy 2:3-4* it is written:

"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him (God) who has chosen him to be a soldier."

By forsaking all to serve Jesus and by not being entangled with the affairs of this life, you will be denying yourself the pleasures of this life to be a disciple (student) of Jesus. By denying yourself the pleasures of this life which are contrary to the will of God, you will be denying yourself and taking up your cross daily to follow Jesus. Jesus spoke these words in *Luke 9:23* as it is written:

"And he (Jesus) said to them all (His disciples), if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Therefore, the disciple (student) of Jesus will forsake the cares of this world and the desires of the flesh and deny those things which hinder his spiritual walk with God and take up his cross daily to serve Jesus and do the will of God the Father in his life.

A DISCIPLE WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT

How do we bear fruit in the Kingdom of God? We bear fruit in the Kingdom of God when we love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and seek to be disciples (students) of Jesus. In doing this, we must realize that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. We can only bear much fruit by yielding our lives unto Him and allowing the Holy Spirit to produce within us godly character. When we submit our lives to Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to produce within us godly character, God will prepare, train, and equip us to follow and do His will. By following and doing the will of God in our lives, we will bear much fruit for God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. In *John 15:5* it is written:

"I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

After we submit and yield our lives to Jesus, we need to submit and yield our lives over to the Holy Spirit to produce godly character within us. The fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in *Galatians 5:22-25* as it is written:

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"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

If we submit our lives to Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to produce godly character within us, God will allow us to bear much fruit in the Kingdom and we will be disciples of Jesus. In *John 15:8* it is written:

"Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit: so shall you be my disciples."

From this, we can understand that a disciple of Jesus will bear much fruit in the Kingdom of God.

A DISCIPLE WILL LOVE ONE ANOTHER

As a Christian, how would you like for God to command a blessing upon your life? Whenever Christians dwell together in unity, God will command His blessing upon those Christians who love one another and dwell together in unity. In *Psalms 133* it is written:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ... for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

The greatest commandment given by Jesus is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. In *Mark 12:30-31*, Jesus spoke these words as it is written:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first (greatest) commandment. And the second is like (it) namely this thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandments greater than these."

Jesus told us, to love one another. In *John 13:34-35* it is written:

"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"

Therefore, a disciple (student) of Jesus will love his neighbor as himself and have love for other Christians who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. By doing

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this, God has promised that He will command His blessing upon our lives.

A DISCIPLE WILL STUDY GOD'S WORD

Jesus was a Jew. His disciples were Jewish. The teachings of Jesus were based in the foundations of Judaism as passed down faithfully from Abraham to David to Jesus. In *John 4:24*, Jesus said that those who worship God will worship God in spirit and in truth. In the Jewish mindset during the days of Jesus, *the highest form of worship to God was study.*

If you love God and seek to be a follower of Jesus, you will be His disciple (student). By being a disciple (student) of Jesus, we will seek to learn of Jesus and the knowledge of God's Word and the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven by studying the Bible. By studying the Word of God, God will give us revelation and understanding of His Word through the help of the Holy Spirit. In *John 14:26*, the Holy Spirit was sent to teach us all things concerning God's Word as it is written:

"But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Holy Spirit will lead us, guide us, and teach us all things concerning God and His Word. In *John 16:13* it is written:

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ..."

In the mind of the Jewish people in the days of Jesus, study was the highest form of worship to God. By desiring to be a disciple (student) of God's Word and by allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us all things, a disciple (student) of Jesus will seek to study God's Word to show himself approved unto God. In *2 Timothy 2:15* it is written:

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed"

For these reasons, a disciple (student) of Jesus will continue to study God's Word and seek to grow in knowledge and understanding of God and the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus spoke these words in *John 8:31-32* as it is written:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed: And ye shall know the truth (God's Word) and the truth (God's Word) shall make you free."

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SUMMARY

In conclusion, we will be disciples (students) of Jesus when we desire and purpose in our heart to love and follow God in the same way that Jesus loved and followed the will of God. In doing so, we need to lay down those things which keep us from giving our entire heart and life to Jesus. We must lay aside the cares of this world, the ways of this world and the desire of our own flesh that are contrary to the will of God for our lives. By doing this, we will deny the pleasures of this world and we will take up our cross daily to follow Jesus and do the will of God.

In order to grow in knowledge and understanding of God, we must seek to study and learn of God's Word and the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven. When we do this, we will seek to love our neighbors as ourselves and we will love our fellow Christians. By doing all these things, we will bear much fruit in the Kingdom of God and we will be good and faithful disciples and servants of God.

By being good and faithful disciples and servants of God, we will grow in spiritual maturity and we will be qualified to be the Bride of Christ. The disciples (students) of Jesus will be His Bride.

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