

Sunday, June 11, 2023 am

Closer to God (46)

Disciples of Jesus (3) – More Scriptures

We are continuing our theme for 2023 and have begun discussing discipleship. We have defined what a disciple is and noted 2 key passages associated with being a disciple. First, Luke 9:23-24 where Jesus said, to come after Him requires: 1) Desire, 2) Deny self, 3) Taking up your cross, and 4) Follow Him. Then last Sunday, we addressed Luke 14:26-33 where Jesus emphasized the cost of being a disciple – and how we need to count that cost as we commit to Him. Jesus, with strong language, declared He must come first – even before family (parents, spouse, children or siblings), and even a willingness to give our own lives for Him if that is what we called upon to do. Today, we want to focus on 3 more passages of scripture that give more details associated with being His disciple. After this, we want to look at some descriptions of a disciple as found in the New Testament.

- I. John 8:31-32 – if you abide in My word...
 - a. Speaking to those who believed in Him, Jesus declared, *“If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*
 - b. Being a disciple is tied to making His word our home. We must understand and realize that His teachings are just as much a part of being His disciple as following His example. Colossians 3:16 – *“Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly.”*
 - c. 2 John 9-11 – recently, we established that the “doctrine of Christ” in this text would have reference to His teachings, INCLUDING that of the apostles.
 - i. As Paul noted in Galatians 1:11-12, cf. Ephesians 3:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13 – they were commended because they welcomed the word as if it were from God. 1 Corinthians 14:37 – *let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.*
 - ii. As you study the life of Jesus in scripture you learn that if you are abiding in His word you are abiding in Him. Consider John 1:1-2. Notice how Jesus is described as “the Word”. John 14:21-24 - our home is in Him and He in us when we keep His word because we love Him
 - d. Also consider that we are ABIDING in His word. This means it is more than knowing it but LIVING it! The word is defined as, *“to remain in the same place over a period of time.”* (L&N 85.55). This is not just the occasional and convenient obedience. It is constant and progressive obedience.
 - i. Matthew 28:19-20, a disciple has learned, *“to observe all things I have commanded you...”* The tense (present) implies CONTINUED observance.
 - ii. Luke 6:46 - Recall when Jesus said, *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”*
 - iii. James 1:21-25 calls for us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.
 - e. IF we abide in His word, we are going to read and study regularly because it IS OUR source of understanding. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 – Timothy was commended because from childhood he had known the holy scriptures able to make him wise unto salvation. Psalm 119:105 - *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.* Psalm 1:1-2 – Blessed is the man... he meditates day and night in His Law.
 - f. AND we will not willfully neglect assembling with the saints, because that is WHERE we learn more about Him (Hebrews 10:24-25). Assembling is a place where we “teach and admonish one another” in singing and as we together study His word. Cf. Ephesians 4:11-16, etc.
- II. John 13:34-35 – by this all will know...
 - a. A powerful passage where Jesus emphasizes “a new commandment” *“that you love one another.”* This was certainly not anything new, but it was reemphasized and refined as Jesus taught this.
 - b. We cannot emphasize enough, how much we need each other in a world that is increasingly hostile toward true Christian faith.

- c. IF you are striving to be a true disciple of Christ, you are going to prefer to be with other disciples of Christ. Romans 12:10, 1 Peter 2:17 we, *“love the brotherhood”*, Philippians 2:3-4, we esteem others better than ourselves and look out for their interests.
- d. And, be reminded that Jesus gave us an example (“as I have loved you”). Ephesians 5:2, 1 John 4:10-11. Consider HOW Jesus loved us:
 - i. **Ultimately, He died for us.** John 15:13 – He did so for His “friends”. 1 John 3:16 - just as He gave His life for us, we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for one another.
 - ii. **He had compassion for others**, including His disciples – Matthew 14:14 – He had compassion.
 - iii. **He performed numerous miracles and helped the needy in every way He could.** We do not have that ability, but we CAN help others with whatever their needs are. Consider: 1 John 3:17, *But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*
 - iv. **He interceded for His disciples and us** – John 17:20-21 – His prayer was for His disciples (believers). Hebrews 7:25 – He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 4:14-16 – He can sympathize with our weaknesses. Again, we do not have the same power as Jesus in this, but we CAN stand up for and intercede for our brethren – 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, *“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another just as you are doing”*. The word, “comfort” is from the Greek, παρακαλέω, (parakaleō) which means to call to one’s side (BDAG, Vine’s, Bullinger, etc.) as in standing beside someone as they go through whatever they are facing. 1 Thessalonians 2:11 speaks of exhorting and comforting.
- e. It is to be evident to others. The way we treat each other and prefer one another as brethren is pivotal to how effective we will be at reaching others. People who are searching for the truth want to find a place where they know people really care about what is truly important. They are watching and, as this verse implies, they have the RIGHT to judge us by the way we treat each other!
- f. Again, this can be emphasized when we assemble together. Do we prefer one another over worldly pursuits when it comes time to assemble? And when we are here, how do we treat each other?

III. John 15:8 – that you bear much fruit

- a. In a text where Jesus describes Himself as the vine and we are branches, He notes that we need to be bearing fruit.
- b. An effective disciple is one that is productive. Simply defined, fruit is produce or that which is produced by planting and watering. Spiritually, we need to be growing.
- c. Hebrews 5:12-14 finds the writer’s loving rebuke, “By this time you ought to be teachers”; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 – Paul had to deal with them as babes because they were not maturing as they ought to. They were NOT producing fruit, OR the amount of fruit called for.
- d. What is fruit? Typically, we associate it with converting souls, and that is the ultimate “fruit”. In whatever way we can, we ought to be striving to reach the lost (Mark 16:15, 2 Corinthians 5:11 – knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, Cf. Acts 5:42 & 8:4 – daily in the temple and from house to house they taught and preached Jesus).
- e. What is fruit? It can also be many other things. Bearing fruit means that we are growing and that can be in many areas.
 - i. **It could be knowledge** – growing in His word (2 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 2:2)
 - ii. **It could be our good works** (Titus 2:14);
 - iii. **It could be our relationship with one another as brethren** – growing closer to each other (see III);
 - iv. **Growing in character** - Galatians 5:22-23 – the “fruit of the Spirit” – love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

- v. ***In righteousness*** - Hebrews 12:11 (after chastening) speaks of producing “*the peaceable fruit of righteousness*”; 2 Corinthians 9:10, Philippians 1:11, James 3:18 etc.
- vi. ***It can be holiness*** – Romans 6:21-22- set free from sin, have your fruit to holiness.
- vii. ***Our worship*** – Hebrews 13:15 – we praise Him, giving Him “the fruit of your lips.”
- viii. ***Colossians 1:10*** says, *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*
- f. The point is: As a disciple, we are going to be growing and if we are truly dedicated to Him and His will, it WILL become known in time. You will be maturing in various ways and thereby producing fruit.

These are some passages that address what is involved in being a disciple of Jesus. But for that life to begin, you have to become a Christian. Consider Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus, instructing his apostles, noted that to “make disciples” they have to obey the gospel (being baptized). BUT as noted, it does not end there. That is just the beginning of a life devoted to learning from and emulating Him in all that we do. That is what true disciples do. We approach His will with a desire “to observe all things that I have commanded you”.

What about you? Are you striving to be His disciple? If you faithfully serve Him, you WILL draw closer to God. In our next lesson we will begin to address how being a disciple is seen in our relationships. Are you a faithful disciple of Jesus? How can we help you? Think about it!