

Believer

Acts 11:26 tells us that *"the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch,"* which seems to indicate a difference between the disciple, a learner, and a faithful worker for Christ. This difference is also present in Acts 16:1. *"Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a **disciple** was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a **believer** but his father was a Greek."* Here Timothy is identified as a disciple, a learner, and his mother identified as a believer. "The word believer is translated from the Greek word *pistis* and is usually translated faith. It conveys the idea of trust, a firm internal conviction regarding the truthfulness of someone or some claim." Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

The only term used to identify a follower of Jesus in the Gospels is disciple. The term also refers to the followers of John the Baptist (Matthew 9:14), of the Pharisees (Mark 2:18), and Moses (John 9:28). The words "the twelve" clarify the meaning when applied to Jesus' chosen disciples (Matthew 10:1, 12:1). Those added to the church in Acts were still called disciples. (Acts 6:1, 7). Moving from Acts (21:16) into the remainder of the New Testament, the term disciple is not used. The Gospels and Acts are the history of learning about Christ. The remainder of the New Testament is to believers who live in the "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) and are in the Kingdom of God bought by the blood of Christ.

The Bible is full of examples of people having a mature understanding of God and His teachings. The dominant motivation in their lives is a conviction of humility in the presence of an infinitely powerful and loving God. Most of chapter 4 of Romans speaks of Abraham and his unwavering belief. The statement *"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness"* (Romans 4:2-3) shows his belief, faith, which led God to call Abraham righteous. The Hebrew writer declares that Abraham's faith, belief, caused him to obey God (Hebrews 11:8). All who have that belief admit they are just passing through this world looking for a permanent home (Hebrews 11:13-14). That home is made for all believers by God (Hebrews 11:10).

There is also strong evidence that a belief in God causes a change in the believer. The Ethiopian eunuch understood the truth and was baptized (Acts 6:36-38). Baptism brings about a change in the spiritual life as belief changes the physical life. The spirit, marred by sin, earned the wage of death (Romans 3:23). But through baptism, the spirit arose to new life (Romans 6:4). In that new life, believers do what God wants them to do (Ephesians 2:10). They walk the way He directs by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:1 to 6:10). By walking as the Spirit directs, believers do not follow the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

Paul expresses the difference between the way people live and act in Ephesians chapter 4. He says they did not learn their old way of life from Christ (Ephesians 4:17-21). Now, as mature believers, Paul says they give up the old ways to practice what they learn in Christ. *"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth"* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The significant change in most people who come to an obedient belief is a complete surrender to God, giving up their will to do His will (Romans 12:1-2). Believers follow Jesus' example to humble

themselves with a desire to serve others (Romans 12:3-8). Humbling to serve is the lesson of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples in John 13:5-8; 13-17. Paul explains this further this way. *"Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma"* (Ephesians 5:2). (Romans 12:9-31) lists many other changes, and Paul summarizes the list this way. *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:21).

God told Israel through Moses and later through Joshua, *"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it"* (Deuteronomy 30:15-16). Their land was physical, and our land is an eternal home in heaven. Therefore, the true believer gives up the way of the world and lives the way of the Spirit. *"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"* (Romans 8:12-14).