

What Is A Disciple

Names applied to the followers of Jesus changed with times and circumstances. When the name Christian was first used, the members of the church in Antioch were called disciples. The changing names were chosen to define the attributes, characteristics, and purposes of individuals and groups of people. *"Not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words"* (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

First and foremost, a follower of Christ lives in His Word. *"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine"* (John 8:31). A disciple must love the things Jesus loves. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciple"* (John 13:34-35). A disciple will then work with the brethren, spread the gospel, and *"bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples"* (John 15:8).

A disciple has a strong desire to follow Christ. Jesus said, *"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple"* (Luke 14:27). And, *"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions"* (Luke 14:33). The principle is self-sacrifice, giving up what an individual desires for what Christ desires.

A disciple learns. As a person begins to learn, a desire to know more should develop. Increased learning leads to baptism (Acts 8:35-39). The education and obeying continue through life, *"continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship"* (Acts 2:42). Paul encouraged Timothy to continue his studies. *"Be diligent (Study NKJ) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). And Peter, writing so we can refresh our memory of what Christ wants us to know, said, *"I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind"* (2 Peter 1:15).

The benefits of discipleship. When one is a true disciple of Christ He gives several blessings. These blessings allow us to be content here on earth as we look forward to the ultimate promise of heaven. Just a few of them are:

- **Rest for our souls.** Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).
- **Freedom from sin.** Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).
- **Peace beyond understanding.** Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful"* (John 14:27). And Paul reminds us, *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1)
- **Joy beyond words.** Peter reminds us that *"though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8).
- **Love beyond knowledge.** Paul expressed the extreme devotion a disciple develops this way. *"You, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God"* (Ephesians 3:17-19).

- **Fellowship in God's family.** Jesus said, *"Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life"* (Mark 10:29-30).
- **Comfort, hope for the future.** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ"* (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).
- **The gift of the Spirit.** *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life"* (John 6:63). Paul also gives a list attributes we get from the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."*

As we live in His word and grow as Christ's disciples, we can enjoy the benefits of belonging to Him. We are also able to share our hope with others, and comfort others, during this time.