

Articles and Sermons :: Learning what being a Christian looks like in daily, practical way!

Learning what being a Christian looks like in daily, practical way! - posted by MaryJane, on: 2011/5/10 7:47

I have been going through a time of difficulty but this teaching was shared with me and it has really helped me. I realize that for a long time my growth, my walk with HIM has been hindered because of my unwillingness to surrender all to Jesus. On some level I was holding back but "all" does mean "ALL"

Just thought I would share because God loves us so much HE is patient to finish the work in us even when we stumble and fail! Thank you Lord for Your love and mercy to show me these things and draw me closer to YOU! Amen!!

Love you LORD!

Mary

A Christian is a disciple of Jesus

If we want a picture of what a disciple of Jesus is like, we need only look at the gospels. We read of men and women who are willing to place careers, family relationships, and social status on the line if only they can follow Jesus. Together, they sit with Him on the mountainside or walk with Him through the market place, hanging on His every word, listening with a dogged determination to obey Him, no matter what the cost. Watch them obey, with Jesus as their Living Master and Teacher! Watch them fall flat on their faces again and again, and bounce back instantly because they are determined to be the "wise builders" who put Jesus' words into practice. See them seek the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness as their primary pursuit and goal in life, no matter what the current activity happens to be. They attend weddings and banquets. They go buy food. They saddle up donkeys. They walk through fields together, pulling off heads of grain and snacking on them as they listen. They are decidedly non-religious. But they are always marked by their settled, determined desire to stick with Jesus and each other so that together they can learn to obey Him. That's a disciple. And that's what a Christian is, too. The above sentences really aren't a fanciful, romantic reconstruction of discipleship. It's the standard Jesus Himself set in place.

Every prophecy in the Old Testament and of the New Covenant and every teaching of Jesus bears out that "obeying His commands and decrees" is the mark of His Spirit within, proving our conversion and regeneration. Someone with that kind of life, that set of priorities, that habit of listening and obeying on an intensely practical level, is a Christian. People who aren't living that way aren't Christians, by God's definition.

Let's just look at a few of the times where God has laid out the basic definition of who a disciple is. Again, we're not looking at how to be saved. We're looking at how to identify whether a person really has entered into an obedient, obsessed, deeply loving, indwelling, and therefore saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26)

The words, "If anyone would come after Me... " mean that this is a universal requirement—no exceptions. All of Jesus' potential disciples must decide that they will:

• deny themselves—no longer live to please themselves;

• take up the cross—endure personal loss, whether through opposition or disappointment or pain or just flat telling the ourselves no ; and

• follow—conform to Jesus' life and teachings in practical daily life.

Not much explanation needed, is there? Jesus was so clear. But what must be emphasized is that this description has to fit a person, or he or she is not Jesus' disciple and therefore not a Christian. And Jesus was very consistent in His teaching. Hear Him again:

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple...Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:25-27,33).

Three times in a row Jesus said, "If anyone does not ____ he cannot be My disciple." He filled in the blank with three absolute, mandatory, 100% accurate descriptions of a disciple. All disciples put Jesus ahead of the desires and demands of family and of self. All disciples choose to die to their own rights. And all disciples hand over all that they own, every resource—whether time, relationships, preferences, money, possessions, or goals—to Jesus. He calls the shots in each of these areas. Anyone who instead tries to add Jesus in to the life they already have, while maintaining their control of it, is not a disciple and so not a Christian. Of course, there will be maturity issues in carrying these things out, but it is not a decision of "whether or not" for a true Christian. They may need help from others to see it and help in carrying it out—but the decision had already been made. Genuine Christians, "not their own, but bought at a high price," have already decided to abandon all. It is not a new decision each time.

Is Jesus teaching a salvation by works and human effort here? Not at all. The disciples were saved by faith in Him, period. But saved from what? Sin, self, and "the empty way of life handed down from our ancestors (1 Peter 1:18). People who are delivered from that deadness will be recognized by the difference in their lives, if in fact they are saved. And saved by what? By God's provision (grace) through their absolute trust in Jesus (faith). People who trust Jesus will do what He says. When they fail, they'll repent and come right back to trusting Him. "If you (really) love Me, you will obey Me."

To sum it up, the terms "Christian" and "disciple" are two ways of saying the same thing. A genuinely saved person, an authentic Christian, will have the characteristics of a disciple Jesus taught and His first followers displayed.

Re: Learning what being a Christian looks like in daily, practical way!, on: 2011/5/13 6:34

Hi MaryJane,

This is a lovely, short exposition of what Jesus said about following Him.

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Indeed. It can even be quite exciting!

