

## THE IDENTITY OF A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

### Introduction

1. The heart of true Christianity could be identified with one word – disciple. More specifically, to be a true Biblical Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus. A disciple is a learner and we are supposed to be life-long learners, never really graduating – certainly as least this side of heaven. It was no accident that Jesus told those who were His learners that they were to go and make more learners. “Go, make disciples of all nations...”
2. It is true that the word “disciple” by itself does not tell us too much. I believe it can be demonstrated in the NT that some were disciples of Jesus but not true believers in Jesus. They were curious learners, but not committed followers of Jesus. Thus, the word did not always carry with it and certainty of redemption (salvation). And I suppose that it is possible to be a believer in Jesus but not much of a disciple of Jesus (though that makes very little sense to me). If you belong to Jesus by redemption, then you are a disciple of Jesus in practice. The quality and intensity of that discipleship are what is in question.
3. Jesus had a great deal to say about being a disciple. And perhaps there is no better passage to catch the real stuff of discipleship as explained by Jesus, than in Matthew 10. The passage begins with, “And he called to him his twelve disciples...” and then Matthew identifies the twelve before recording Jesus’ instruction concerning what it takes to be one of His disciples. I think it is accurate to say that what is recorded in this chapter is among Jesus’ favorite teaching. And the people throughout the centuries who have responded to Jesus’ instruction on discipleship are those who have in some measure changed the course of history.
4. With the help of some notes by John MacArthur, consider these illustrations:
  - a. Florence Nightingale – Florence Nightingale, the nineteenth-century nursing pioneer who became famous for her nursing service to the fighting men of the Crimean War, wrote in her diary, “To-day I am 30--the age Christ began His mission. Now no more childish things, no more vain things. Now Lord let me think only of thy will” (Cecil Woodham-Smith, Florence Nightingale [N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1951], p. 53).

Toward the end of her industrious life someone asked her the secret of her effectiveness to which she replied, "I can only give this explanation, I have kept nothing back from God."

- b. Dr. Howard A. Kelly, a world-famous surgeon and gynecologist wrote in his diary on the night of his graduation from medical school, "I dedicate myself, my time, my capabilities, my ambition, everything to Him. Blessed Lord, sanctify me to Thy uses. Give me no worldly success, which may not lead me nearer to my Savior!"
- c. Jim Elliot who was killed by the Wuaorani Indians in Ecuador - "God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn up for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life but a full one, like You, Lord Jesus" (Elisabeth Elliot, Shadow of the Almighty [N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1958], p. 55). That's exactly what he got.
- d. Jonathan Edwards - God mightily used the eighteenth-century American pastor and theologian because he was willing to pay the price of true discipleship. In his memoirs he wrote, "I have been before God, and have given myself, all that I am and have, to God; so that I am not, in any respect, my own. I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will, these affections, which are in me. Neither have I any right to this body, or any of its members--no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet; no right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell, or this taste. I have given myself clear away, and have not retained any thing as my own...." "I have been this morning to him, and told him, that I gave myself wholly to him. I have given every power to him; so that, for the future, I'll challenge no right in myself, in no respect whatever. I have expressly promised him, and I do now promise Almighty God, that by his grace I will not. I have this morning told him that I take him for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, not acting as if it were; and his law, for the constant rule of my obedience; and would fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life; and that I did believe in Jesus Christ, and did receive him as a Prince and Savior; and that I would adhere to the faith and obedience of the gospel, however hazardous and difficult the confession and practice of it may be...." "I pray God, for the sake of Christ, to look upon it as a self-dedication, and to receive me now as entirely his own, and to deal with me, in all respects, as such,

whether he afflicts me or prospers me, or whatever he pleases to do with me, who am his. "Now, henceforth, I am not to act, in any respect, as my own.--I shall act as my own, if I ever make use of any of my powers to do any thing that is not to the glory of God, and do not make the glorifying of him my whole and entire business:-- if I murmur in the least at affliction; if I grieve at the prosperity of others; if I am in any way uncharitable; if I am angry because injuries; if I revenge them; if I do any thing purely to please myself, or avoid any thing for the sake of my own ease; if I omit any thing because it is great self-denial; if I trust to myself; if I take any of the praise of the good that I do, or that God doth by me; or if I am in any way proud" (The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1 [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974], p. xxv).

5. Those who lived as fully devoted followers of Jesus significantly impacted their world for Christ! That is the kind of call that Jesus makes in this passage to any who would be His disciple. Thomas Huxley once said, "It doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him." It is not about the raw material; it is what we do with it and Jesus says, "Follow me – be my disciple."
6. Today we get a start on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, but equally important, we have the obligation to look carefully at ourselves and determine if we are willing to pay the price – if we are willing to accept the high calling of being a learner of Jesus. For the next few weeks we begin to consider the marks of a disciple of Jesus Christ.
7. First let's read the text beginning with verse 24 to the end of the chapter. Then **let's focus our attention today on verses 24-25, where we will discover that a true disciple is submitted to and satisfied with Jesus!**

## I. A DISCIPLE IS NOT ABOVE HIS TEACHER

### A. The student/teacher relationship

1. I suppose the goal of most teachers is that their students would go on to achieve great things, well beyond them. But if the student remains with a particular teacher, the teacher can only take them as far as he or she has gone.
2. In the case of Jesus, He was the teacher, the authority. Those who came to Him and sat at His feet were those who desired to learn of Him. Earlier in the chapter Jesus has made it clear to His students that he was sending them as sheep in the midst of wolves (16), that they would be flogged in the synagogues (17), that they would be dragged before pagan courts (18), that their own families would put

some of them to death (21), that they would be hated for His sake, but would have to endure (22), that they would be persecuted and forced to flee from city to city (23) – and then this statement, “A disciple is not above his teacher!” If you chose to follow Jesus, as a disciple, you are not above your Teacher!

#### B. The master/slave relationship

1. The teacher/learner metaphor makes the point, but the master/slave metaphor intensifies it. Generally the relationship between a student and a teacher is by choice. The master slave relationship is determined. The master speaks of supreme authority and the slave reminds of absolute submission. We may choose to follow Jesus, but we must also realize that He is the Master and we are the servants!
2. If I am to be a disciple of Jesus, I must be submitted to His authority. I must willingly listen to His instruction and obediently follow His commands. It is really not up for negotiation!
3. Essentially the teacher/student and master/slave metaphors establish the relationship of Jesus toward His disciples and the disciples before Jesus. We are never above Him and we must always be submissive to Him. That is where discipleship begins. To lose sight of His authority is to compromise the relationship. “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.”

## II. A DISCIPLE IS LIKE HIS TEACHER

#### A. The goal of the student

1. Jesus taught His followers as recorded in Luke 6:40, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”
2. That is the goal of the student – to be like the teacher. That is the goal of the disciple of Jesus – to be like Jesus! (I am reminded of the cry of Paul’s heart in Philippians 3:10 – “That I may know Him...” What is the cry of our heart? A true disciple desires to be like His teacher – like His master!)
3. We are learners of Jesus and followers of Jesus in order to be like Jesus! At least that ought to be the motivation. There were many intrigued learners of Jesus and many curious followers of Jesus – but they had no real interest in becoming like Jesus! Do we? Jesus says that this is the goal of the student of Jesus – to be like his Master.

#### B. The goal of the servant

1. It is one thing to say, "I want to be like my teacher." It may be something a bit more to say, "I want to be like my master!" Sometimes the relationship between masters and slaves was not good. The master may have been harsh or abusive or even inhumane. Sometimes the relationship was very good. Some slaves would actually voluntarily offer to be slaves for life, so much did they love their master!
2. The one phrase that to me is quite amazing here is, "It is enough." That is an amazing statement! "It is enough that the servant be like the master. It is enough that the student be like his teacher." Is it enough for you, or can you only be satisfied with something more?
3. A true disciple is seeking nothing more (we are not in this to see what we can get out of it) and nothing less (we are not trying to avoid what Jesus had to endure) than to be like Jesus and to be satisfied with that!
4. A disciple of Jesus is submitted to Jesus and is satisfied with Jesus. O to find our satisfaction **in Him** rather than trying to find it in the trinkets the world keeps selling and we keep buying! Now, to have as our goal to become like Jesus and to be satisfied in that goal to the point where we can honestly say, "it is enough!", we must understand that in becoming like Him we will be treated like He was treated.

### III. A DISCIPLE WILL BE TREATED LIKE HIS TEACHER

#### A. What they called the Master

1. Generally speaking, the master of the house would be in a position that carried honor and respect. Clearly Jesus is the Master of the house, but look what they called Him!
2. Beelzebub was a name that meant "Lord of the Flies." The name morphed into a mocking takeoff of "Beelzebul" which meant "Lord of the dwelling" reflecting a pagan deity "Prince Baal." Sometimes the name was spoken, "Beelzebel" which meant "Lord of the dung." When used on Jesus here, in effect, the name became synonymous with "Lord (or prince) of demons." In other words, Jesus' enemies were calling the Master of the house, the Lord Jesus, Satan! There is an example of this just one chapter back (**Matthew 9:32-34**)! So, if they equated the Master with Satan what do you supposed they will say about you?

#### B. How they treated the disciple

1. The transition is obvious. Again, if they call the Master of the house (one to whom

honor is due) Beelzebul – Satan, what do you think they will call you and do to you, His followers?

2. But a true disciple of Jesus is submitted to his Lord and satisfied in Him! As one commentator wrote, “Don't ask to be loved by the world...Don't ask to be famous...Don't ask to be accepted by everyone...and Don't ask to miss persecution. Ask only to be like the Lord and pursue that goal.” But also understand that in becoming like Jesus you will likely be treated as He was treated!

At other times Jesus explained that concept more fully. In John 13:16 he told His disciples, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.*** And in the same discourse, He taught, ***If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me*** (John 15:18-21). Jesus went on to say, ***the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God*** (John 16:2).

## Conclusion

1. “It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher.” Is it? When it is, others will see the joy and peace and freedom and hope that we have in Christ – things that can only be found in Christ. While it is true that to be like Christ will unleash the wrath of the world, it will also enrich the life of the disciple and those who are exposed to the message of God's grace and mercy as the Spirit does His work!
2. A disciple of Christ is submissive to Christ and is satisfied in Christ. Maybe you want to be, but you are not there yet. You want it to be enough, but it is not yet enough. I submit to you that at the time of this teaching, the handpicked disciples of Jesus were not yet together either. But God was at work. And as they continued to “master the Master” they became the people who would turn the world upside down for God's glory. Those fickle, fumbling, faltering followers of Jesus in the Gospels were the very same fearless, faithful, firm-footed followers of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles. The

difference was that they had become like their Master and they found it to be enough!

3. If you are not a disciple of the Master, you need to become one. The way to becoming a disciple involves repentance and faith. If you are a disciple, you need to submit to Christ and be satisfied in Him. The way to this goal is to remain under His teaching, committed to learning and following and obeying and pleasing the Master – and the more like Him you become, the more satisfied in Him you will be!