

DISCIPLES OF JESUS

We are called to be disciples. The Greek word "mathetes" translated into English is "disciple." It means a learner or pupil. In the ancient world it referred to a person who not only learned but also followed in dedication by being an adherent to the way taught by a spiritual leader or philosopher. The root of this word is where we get our word "math." This is the mental effort needed to think something through. Luke 14:27 and 28 illustrates this meaning when Jesus said, *"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"* A disciple therefore is one who has "done the math." In summary, a disciple of Jesus is a believer who has thought things through and has decided to be a follower of Christ. He or she learns the teachings of Scripture and the lifestyle God requires and adheres with discipline in daily action. He or she is not only acting on what they thought through, but have full determination and commitment to finish their life in this discipline.

Isaiah had disciples. The Bible says in Isaiah 8:16, *"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples."* He desired to leave a record of his prophecy with his followers. We see that Elisha was part of the sons or school of the prophets and became, after Elijah, their foremost teacher in II Kings. John the Baptist had disciples. The Bible says, *"Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"* (Matthew 9:14). *"...One of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."* (Luke 11:1).

A Greek would hold in extremely high esteem Socrates, Plato or Aristotle. A Jew would hold in equally high esteem the famous Jewish teacher, *"...Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people..."* (Acts 5:34). To find credible leverage, Paul said, *"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."* (Acts 22:3). No longer were there going to be men between a person and God who took the same role of a Moses of whom the Pharisees proudly asserted, *"...We are Moses' disciples"* (John 9:28). Paul said, *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until*

Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). Paul did not take any of the following for himself. This is why he said, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"* (I Corinthians 11:1). Let us search the Scriptures together and discover our role as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. A disciple is someone who is with Jesus. Adoration

"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). A disciple is one who is with Jesus. I Corinthians 1:9 informs us, *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."* We who know Christ are to live in adoration of Him.

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11). This is the beginning point of discipleship -- unity with Christ in worshipful adoration. Jesus said, *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Without this inextricable working union with Jesus, we can do absolutely nothing profitable for either time or eternity.

2. A disciple is one who lives in abandonment to Jesus as Lord and turning back is no longer an option. Obsession

Jesus said, *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26, 33). Our Lord's call to discipleship is an all-or-nothing summons. Taking up our cross to follow Jesus is an intended one-way street, never to return. *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it"* (Luke 9:23,24). *"Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee"* (Luke 18:28). Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." There is no call for half-way business of following Jesus. It must be obsession with us. *"And*

Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

3. A disciple has no divided loyalties. Dedication

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). We know in fact that when we love the Lord the way we should, we will love our loved ones far better than if we put them first. We are to love Him so fully that there is no close second in our love. There must be no competition for our devout love and dedication. Our Lord said, *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).* Our Lord gave this penetrating question, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).* If Christ is Lord at all, He is Lord of all!

4. A disciple is a servant. Submission

The Lord rebuked people who desired to rule over other's lives. If Christ has made us free, we should not put others in bondage. *"But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:42-43).* Christ elevated the life of servitude by washing the disciples' feet. He encourages us to do the same. *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14,15).* We are not to wait to be served, we are to be waiting on God's servants. We are to find a need and fill it! *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).* *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).*

5. A disciple is a witness. Mobilization

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Those who follow Christ are simultaneously called to be His

witnesses. Acts 1:8 promises, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* The word for “witness” in Greek is “martus.” This is where we get our English word “martyr.” We are to be witnesses for our Lord even if it costs us our lives as martyrs.

6. A disciple stays true to his calling and operates lovingly with those of different callings. Organization

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (II Corinthians 10:12). In the early church, Christians were taking sides with their favorite Christian leaders. Paul corrected this by saying, *“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour”* (I Corinthians 3:8).

7. A disciple is one who has become like Jesus. Duplication

Have you ever wondered what is God’s goal for your life? Jesus answers by saying, *“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master”* (Luke 6:40). If we grow in grace, we grow up being like Jesus! *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”* (Ephesians 4:15).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.