

Are We Really Disciples of Jesus Christ?

In the New Testament salvation and discipleship are so closely linked that they should be considered as joined like Siamese twins, not identical but joined in such a way that trying to sever one from the other would result only in death.

Too often with the gospel message of salvation, discipleship is considered as something optional, which the Christian may delay indefinitely or even not accept as conditional to our receiving rewards with our salvation from death.

The absence of the concept of discipleship leaves a vacuum which we instinctively try to fill with some substitute to discipleship.

We all feel *"I'm saved but what now?"*

What could we be substituting for discipleship?

Pietism

The affectionate feeling for the person of Jesus Christ which is valued for itself alone and is unrelated to cross-bearing or keeping the Commandments of Christ.

It is entirely possible to feel for Jesus an ardent emotional love which is NOT a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the love for the Virgin Mary felt by certain devout people, a love that is by nature purely subjective romanticism.

Jeremiah 17:9 [NIV] *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*

Our hearts can play emotional tricks on us and make us entirely capable of falling in love with imaginary objects or romantic religious ideas.

This mistaken affectionate love arises from the erroneous notion that love is an enjoyable feeling, without intellectual and sacrificial commitments to the person who is the object of our love.

Jesus gave us a rule by which we can test if our love for Him is true or just a pious sentiment.

John 14:21-24 [NIV] *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."*

Proof of love for Jesus is removed from the realm of feeling and placed firmly in the realm of practical obedience and commitment.

Literalism

Jesus was referring to this when He reproached the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:23 [NIV] *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices, mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former.”*

Literalism manifests itself in many ways but it can always be identified in that we live by the letter of the Word rather than the Spirit.

We fail to apprehend the inner deep meaning behind the literal Words of Christ.

For example, Christ commands baptism and we fulfil this act by immersion in water but the radical meaning behind this physical act is ignored.

Romans 6:1-4 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that **all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?** We were therefore **buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**”*

A new life of a disciple of Jesus, is learning to live and serve as He did and then continuing to do so all their life.

Literalism attempts to build a holy temple upon a sandy foundation of the religious self.

Such a person will suffer, sacrifice, labour, but will **not** die with Christ.

They will **not** deny self, take up their cross and follow Christ, by crucifying their old way of life.

Zealous religious activity

“Working for Christ” has today been accepted as the ultimate test of Godliness.

Christ has become a project to be promoted or a cause to be served, instead of a Lord to be obeyed.

Many dedicated but mistaken people seek to do *“for Christ”* whatever their fancy suggests should be done, and in whatever way they think best.

The ‘what’ and ‘how’ of Christian service and witness can only originate in the Sovereign Will of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:14 [NIV] *“...because those who are **led by the Spirit** of God are sons of God.”*

The Holy Spirit leads, the initiative must be totally His, we follow.

Psalm 19:13 [King James] *“Keep back thy servant also from **presumptuous sins**; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”*

It is presumptuous on our part to do our “own thing” and then expect the Holy Spirit to follow us and bless our venture.

Too often we are “*busy beavers*” presumptuously ignoring this fact of God’s initiative, and the end result is an army of people who go without being sent and speak without being prompted by the Holy Spirit as He brings God’s Word to remembrance.

John 14:23-26 [NIV] *“Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. “All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

To avoid such unauthorised substitutions to true discipleship we all need to carefully study and submit to the Sovereignty of Christ and seek to be a true disciple of Jesus.

As a true disciple of Jesus Christ we follow His commands and direction of our lives as we lay our lives down for Him to use as He wills.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves a total remake of our thinking and our lives.

The word translated “*body*” involves the total of our life experience. Our physical body, our mind and the human spirit in us that gives us intellect and an experience of existing.

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”*

1 Corinthians 2:11 [NIV] *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

Only by the Holy Spirit working with our spirit can this great transformation take place and only then are we true disciples of Jesus Christ.