

A TRUE DISCIPLE

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**“A new commandment I give to you, that
You love one another: just as I have loved
You, you are also to love one another. By this
All people will know that you are my disciples,
If you have love for one another.”**

† John 13:34-35

Are you a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Probably nobody’s ever asked you this question before but it bears some study and thought. Now most of the people who visit our website are true seekers—they’re not just “tire kickers.” So if I asked you that question you would probably respond immediately without even thinking: “Yes, of course I am a disciple of Jesus.”

I was witnessing to a man a few days ago who said he was a Lutheran. One of the things I told him was how it’s always puzzled me why most people who claim to be Christians never study salvation and how to obtain it—they just take the word of their pastor or priest. And that might be dangerous—especially since so many “ministers” today are not truly saved themselves. Listen, just because a person claims to be a pastor or priest doesn’t mean that they know God at all or if they do they may not know Him very well. Friends, if you want to be certain you’re saved and will go to Heaven when you die then you need to study salvation and be sure that you *qualify*, isn’t that right? How do you do that? You do it by being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, I believe you will learn from this teaching that many Christians and ministers today are just like the Pharisees in this regard proving something I preach and write all the

time—even though we’re living under a New Covenant based on “better promises” the nature of man never really changes much. It will *only* change if you become a real, *true* disciple of Jesus Christ. Now if this interests you—if you love Jesus and want to be more like Him— then read on.

So if you’re still with me and want to be a true disciple of Jesus then perhaps you should study Jesus’ definition of what a *true* disciple is and not take anybody else’s word for it. Right? And like everything else I preach and teach on, I am the first to tell you and encourage you to find out the truth—don’t just take my word for it. And how do you *learn* the truth? Well, interestingly, as you will learn from this teaching—you learn the truth and are “set free” by becoming a *true* disciple of Jesus Christ. So this whole question of whether or not you are a true disciple of Jesus is in some ways a conundrum like God Himself and most of all that He does.

But if we want to know the truth then all we have to do is be like Apollos, of whom the Scriptures record—“He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures ... he had been instructed in the way of the Lord ... and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.” (Acts 18:24-25)

Fortunately for him, Apollos did not have a religious spirit and he was open to correction by Priscilla and Aquila when “They took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” And this is entirely necessary for us as well if we want to be true disciples of Jesus because one of the attributes of being a true disciple of Jesus is that we will become more like Jesus—the Lord Himself said so in Luke 6:40.

Many, many years ago as I was reading the Word early in the morning, I noticed a very powerful truth from John 8. I’d heard for years and even saw the words inscribed in the stained glass dome of the State Capitol of Pennsylvania the words of John 8:32—“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Haven’t we all heard these words? What a powerful statement! And it’s a *true* statement, isn’t it? Knowing the truth about anything will set a person free from all deception, isn’t that right?

But the Holy Spirit showed me that morning something that I’d never seen before and most of the Church never preaches because this verse—John 8:32—is one of the most incorrectly quoted verses in all of the Bible and it creates a serious problem for most Christians because they are not able to ever *learn* and *see* the truth because they are not really disciples of Jesus.

Now if you don't believe me just turn there and you will see what the Spirit showed me that day—this verse is taken out of context! So if it's taken out of context then it's not really true is it? And we know from Satan that this is one of his main methods of attack—get you to believe something that you read in the Word that is not true if it's a conditional statement and you don't meet the conditions of the statement. If this is confusing you then simply read Jesus' words in John 8:31. You will notice that this is a *conditional* statement, isn't it? A conditional statement means *IF* you do a certain thing *THEN* the Lord will do something.

Notice what Jesus said, "*IF* (italics added for emphasis) you abide (or continue) in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." So this is a conditional statement, isn't it? We only come to "know the truth" and are then "set free" *if* we are Jesus' disciples. And it's here in this verse also that we learn what one of the qualifications are for being a *true* disciple of Jesus Christ—so mark it down as #1: abiding or spending a great deal of time reading and meditating for understanding the Word of God each day.

Other qualifications Jesus gave for being a true disciple are found in Luke 14 and are as follows:

2. Luke 14:26, "*IF anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sister, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.*"

Now let me briefly say what we all know about this passage—Jesus is certainly not implying that we "hate" our own families—that contradicts His own teaching about love, doesn't it? And the Apostle Paul admonishes husbands to "love" their wives. So why the use of such a strong Greek word for *hate*? Jesus is saying that a disciple must have such a strong *love* for Jesus that all other loves—even our greatest earthly love for family and our own lives—must pale by comparison. So meditate on this for a bit and see if you qualify for being a disciple based on this condition.

3. Luke 14:27, "*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*"

Have you ever studied this? What is your cross? In a sense we all have similar *crosses* to bear but in another way all of our respective crosses are a bit different, aren't they? I often meditate on the rich young ruler who came to Jesus. He was a righteous man, wasn't he? Yet he could not become a disciple of Jesus because he was unwilling to pay the price for discipleship—his wealth. He was not able to "hate his own life" because it was a life of riches.

If he had been poor it would not have been a problem, would it? Almost all poor people are willing to give up their lives for Jesus. We will discuss this qualification next.

4. Luke 14:33, “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

The rich, young ruler was not able to “renounce all that he has” and what a pity because if he had understood spiritual things and the fact that there’s a spiritual bank in Heaven he would have realized that investing all that he had into the Kingdom of God would have paid much more handsome dividends in eternity. And isn’t it true that if you cannot do this—if Jesus told you the same thing, or perhaps even worse like he told Ezekiel that He was requiring the life of his wife which would be much worse (for most of us) than losing all of our wealth—that you are guilty of idolatry?

I find it amazing today that so few Christians in America (the land of plenty) tithe. According to statistical polls on tithing only 3% of adults tithe from their incomes; this has held steady from the 1980s. If you’re not tithing, my brother and sister, maybe you’d better ask the Holy Spirit if you are really a disciple of Jesus? I’ve preached in churches and heard Christians say, “Brother Timmons, I don’t think the tithe is New Testament.” I always reply the same way, “Oh, really? Well perhaps you should open it up and see what Jesus taught about tithing.” And I leave it at that unless the Lord has me say something different.

I’ve shared this testimony and truth—because it was a revelation to me—in *Mysterious Secrets* and other writings because it occurred way back in December, 1989, when I was preaching at Pastor Solomon Batire’s church in Akure. I was asked to teach on tithing one night when I wasn’t supposed to preach during a pastor’s conference because the pastor who was supposed to speak that night wasn’t there. So I had no notes prepared and had not sought the Lord about the message. I went to the pulpit and said, “Open your bibles to Malachi” and as I did a vision broke right in front of me about 8 feet away. I saw Satan go before the Lord’s throne and he spoke these chilling words, “This person is not a tither, so I have a right to attack their finances.”

Now that was not only a vision but also a revelation to me that *if* we don’t give the Lord His 10% we are giving Satan an open door to attack our finances. Now interestingly, at the church in Libby, Montana, the Lord also spoke to me about this in the lives of a family that attended the church there (later). This couple had a daughter of about 10-12 and her mother would bring her to church while the father never came. After the mother and child had attended for about 2 months she phoned me and asked if they could come over one Saturday for counseling in the area of finances. They had a lucrative business selling wood stoves and were

making \$300,000+ a year. But the husband was involved in fire fighting forest fires. He had purchased a lot of custom made firefighting equipment that was consuming all of their finances. I knew none of this at the time, however, when she made an appointment to meet with Evie and I for counseling—I didn't know their financial condition. But we had a week to prepare for their meeting and I prepared as I always do through prayer and asking the Spirit for His thoughts. The Lord told me that they were having financial problems and it was because they were not tithers.

So when they came for counseling, after they had discussed their financial problem for an hour, I just calmly said, "Well, it's no secret to me—the Lord told me several days ago that you had this problem and why." So they immediately wanted to know *why* and I told them. They emphatically denied it over and over. Now, my brother and sister, I know the voice of the Lord and what He told me so it doesn't matter what they said to me—I knew the truth. But if you don't "fess up" as they say in the south and "master your sins" as the Lord told Cain in Genesis then nobody can help you because they had a spiritual problem that I'd put my finger on by the help of the Holy Spirit but I couldn't do anything about it—they had to make a decision whether they wanted to correct the problem and do something about it.

Interestingly, the husband began to come to church and they attended every Sunday for a year or two but they never did anything about the problem except prove that it was true so their finances never turned around. Unfortunately, like a lot of people who come to you for help, the devil finds a way to make them become *offended* so that you can no longer minister to them. They become determined to "shoot the messenger" as we say in America. Jesus had this problem with the Pharisees and we still have a lot of Pharisees in churches today. Now I'm not saying they weren't saved, I believe they were but they weren't true disciples of Jesus. A true disciple of Jesus puts Him *numero uno*, #1, in their lives.

This can present a problem in marriages and other relationships as well. Being in ministry for years you learn that quite often in a marriage relationship one person is a disciple of Jesus while the other is not—they may be a believer and a genuine Christian but they are not a true disciple because they don't qualify but their spouse does. Often this leads to problems and conflicts in the marriage, especially in the area of the tithe.

5. John 15:8, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples."

Jesus said that if we were His disciples then we would "bear much fruit" and we know that this refers to spiritual fruit for the Kingdom. In short, it means we will bear both spiritual fruit through the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5) that we are growing with the help of the Holy

Spirit, and other spiritual fruit such as souls for the Kingdom of Heaven. And the more we follow Jesus and the closer we follow Him and become more like our Teacher the more fruit we should bear.

And I believe there is a huge difference between true disciples and mere Christians in this regard. Most Christians, frankly, do not bear much fruit for the Kingdom. In fact, they often bear more fruit for the Dark Kingdom based on what the Lord said to me a few years ago: “Most Christians manifest demonic spirits more than they manifest the Holy Spirit.”

And perhaps nowhere is this more true than the following qualification that is our text for this teaching lesson—the area of love and the love commandment.

6. John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

I believe if you are honest you will say that there is very little of this type love in the average church. In fact, we probably see more in the world in this regard—though it’s not specifically the *type* love Jesus referred to, i.e., loving one another “just as I have loved you.”

But people of the world are quick to raise funds for a family whose home burns or whose child needs surgery or chemo for cancer—something you rarely ever see a local church do. Unfortunately, God often has to send “outsiders” into a church family to get people healed or delivered from devils—we’ve been sent a number of times. And I can tell you that we’re rarely received with open arms by the pastor. He’s not willing to help them but he resents it when God sends an outside ministry into that community to answer people’s prayers for help. This is particularly true when it comes to deliverance ministry—most of the time when I obtain their pastor’s phone number and call him to discuss ministry to a member of their congregation they never call me back.

No it’s sad to say that what the seminary professor who wrote “No Place for Truth” back in the ‘90s discovered is true—the average church in America now sees itself as a small business enterprise and not a shelter for the poor, the wretched, and the average pastor no longer sees himself as a broker of the truth.

So what are you going to do about it? One thing’s for certain—we need more disciples now than ever before and we should all be about the Father’s business just like Jesus was and still is. Years ago when I was reading in Proverbs as is my custom each day, it was on the 10th and

as I was reading Proverbs 10:5, I was gently reminded by the Holy Spirit that “we are still in harvest time.”

I trust that this teaching has encouraged you to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ if you are not one already and that you will “finish your race” as a true disciple and bear much fruit for the Kingdom to glorify the Father.

MARANATHA