

9. Being a disciple of Jesus with free will

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What does it take to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ? This is a heavy duty question. Not all the born-again Christians want to be the disciples of Him, because it requires unselfishness and devotion to Him out of their own free will, not forced.

I find 6 requirements that every believer must make in becoming a disciple of Jesus. Let's look at them one at a time.

A. TRANSITION

John 1:35-37 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

John the Baptist was the real deal when it comes to no selfish ambition of his own. He was happy to point out Jesus as the Lamb of God to his two disciples, John and Andrew. I wouldn't doubt for one moment that John the Baptist even encouraged them to follow the Lord and gave them his blessings. He truly lived up to what he preached.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

No matter what kind of denominational churches believers attend, they should be disciples of Jesus Christ. It is not unusual for some believers to be concerned about their denominations' traditions and rules over what the Lord says clearly in the Bible. What they do is no different than what the Pharisees did with their own traditions over God's law during Jesus' time in the first century. Every believer of Jesus Christ should make a transition to be a disciple of Him.

B. EVALUATION

John 1:38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

It is worth noting that this was the first recorded question by Jesus. But this was not just any casual question people throw at each other like, "Whatsup?" When Jesus asked them, "What do you seek?", He was forcing them to define their purposes and goals.

The question Jesus asked was not because He didn't know what they were looking for, rather it was for these two people's own benefits. It was meant to be a searching, probing, and evaluating question dealing with motivation.

We find the same thing from the first question by God to the first couple that was done in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

Was God playing a peek-a-boo with Adam and Eve, because He couldn't find them? Absolutely not. The Lord was giving them one more chance to repent from their sins.

We can ask the same question to ourselves today. What do we seek in God? We all must evaluate our hearts seriously and honestly. Please don't ignore this question God asks us today. Is it our own comfort and convenience in our lives we seek, or the glory of God?

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.

C. SUBMISSION

John 1:39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

All the transition and evaluation would be pointless if we don't submit to the Lord. A complete obedience to the Lord is the BEST WAY to keep ourselves on the right track with Him. But can we do it completely? We all struggle because of our sinful nature that gets in our way of total submission to the Lord. But we cannot give up; we must strive.

True disciples submit to the Lord's commandments that are in the Bible with everything they have. When they sin, they quickly ask the Lord to forgive them with sincere repentance. That is where our Lord's mercy and grace come in.

Let me show you an interesting word here. The Greek words for 'staying' and 'remain' are the same word and it is 'meno' which the Lord Jesus also used in His Upper Room Discourse from chapter 13-17 after the last supper.

John 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

This is such a simple truth, but many believers ignore it. It is impossible for any one of us to know the Lord Jesus without spending time with Him through His Word, the Bible and speaking to Him in prayers.

Jesus said, "Come and see." Now we don't know where Jesus was living at this time, but we do know from other verses of Scripture that He had no home to speak of. But Jesus was speaking to them on a deeper level. He was not just saying, "Come and see where I rest," but, "Come and see who I am. Come and see what I am all about."

Jesus is saying to you and me today, "Come on! Come see for yourself. Come investigate for yourself. You will see so much, too." The rewards of knowing the Lord are phenomenal – His blessings, not talking about a monetary way, but abundant spiritual blessings from the Lord. The Lord will use you more and more to minister, to comfort, to encourage others and to bring glory to Himself. Isn't that the reason we exist?

D. MISSION

John 1:40-42a One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

After I received Jesus into my heart, I couldn't wait to tell others about Him. Though I didn't have tactfulness, nor did I have any good method and knowledge of how to evangelize to other people about the Lord Jesus, I was just excited to tell them where they could find eternal hope and life.

Whenever we see Andrew in the Gospels of the NT, he always brought people to Jesus. Andrew's way was not complicated or fancy, but very effective and simple. He literally brought people to the Lord.

How we need more Andrews today! If we had more Andrews, we would have more Simon Peters. And it is so neglected. God's primary way of reaching people is through people. It always has been and it always will be – far more than massive evangelistic crusades in football stadiums.

Do you know someone who does not know the Lord Jesus? Of course, who doesn't, right? You may not know how to evangelize effectively, but do you have a willingness, a car, and time? Guess what, you can do what Andrew did. Invite them to the church, pick them up from their home and bring them to the church. Let God speak to them. You do what Andrew did, and let the Lord do the rest. Disciples of Jesus should want to make other disciples.

E. TRANSFORMATION

John 1:42b Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

The word 'look' in Greek is 'emblepo' which means 'gazed, look intently.' You might say He stared at Simon Peter. Just like when the Lord Jesus saw Simon, he also saw what he was going to be, He sees each believer's potential if we choose to obey Him. Our Lord doesn't want His disciples to remain as they were, but grow and transform in Him.

The Lord Jesus named Simon "Cephas," which means a small stone, I guess you can call him "Rocky." If you know Peter from the Gospels, you know that he was not always a rock solid guy. He went from getting A+ in answering Jesus' question "Who do you think that I am?" in Matthew 16 to flunking right after that commendation by being called "Get behind me, satan." He totally went from Rocky to muddy.

But the Lord Jesus saw Peter, empowered and filled with the Holy Spirit, preaching to the multitude in Acts 2. He also saw Peter as a leader in the early church, the author of two NT epistles, the source for the Gospel of Mark, and displaying a rock solid faith in Christ to his death.

Every disciple of Jesus must bring forth transformation to be more like the Lord as they follow Him.

F. FREE WILL

John 1:43-51 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And He

said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

One thing we must notice is that Jesus didn't stumble upon Philip at Bethsaida. He purposely went to Bethsaida near the Sea of Galilee to meet Philip. This shows the omniscient attribute of Jesus as God. In case you are not familiar with the term 'omniscient,' it means 'all knowing.' Only God can have this ability, not your mom. She just made you think that she knew everything you've done when you were a kid.

By God's sovereign will, the born-again believers were predestined. If I explain this in a simpler way, here it is: God, before the creation of the universe, designated all the born-again believers to be His chosen people.

Then, I know that some will say, "That is completely unfair. What if I was not chosen, but I want to be a born-again Christian? Since He has already designated, it means I cannot be one of them, huh?" I have a perfect answer for that: "Commit your life to Christ, then you will find out that you are one of them." Then, someone else may say, "Wait a minute, I don't like that. It sounds like God is shoving down our throat His way. What if I chose not to be one?" Then I will say, "You just prove that you are not one of the chosen ones by God."

Though God's predestination and election of individual believers were done before the creation of the universe, those individuals must make their own choices to follow the Lord Jesus and be His disciples.

John 7:37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."

Many smart theologians from both schools of Calvinism and Armenianism have a hard time understanding this co-existence of Divine predestination through God's Sovereignty and human free will in the Bible. Somehow they think that we should choose one or another. I am so glad that I am not one of those smart people to complicate what the Lord is simply telling us. The Bible is written for everyone to understand, not just brilliant people.

Listen, in the Bible, God's sovereignty and human's free will are beautifully integrated and work together, not contradicting each other. So, let's approach this issue from the Bible's way: "The sovereign, all knowing God knew who is going to choose to receive Jesus Christ as his or her Savior and Lord by one's own free will before the creation, so He simply confirmed it with His predestination procedure." What is so difficult about that?

Following Jesus and becoming a disciple of Jesus must come from our own free will. Our God will NOT push His way into our lives. Because He loves us so much that He did everything He could, but becoming His follower is totally in our free will. Without the acceptance through our own free will, none of "transition, evaluation, submission, mission, and transformation" will take place in our hearts.

Nathanael's response to the Lord in v49 was the right one. He called Him, "The Son of God and the King of Israel." Many people hear the truth through the Word of God when they come to the Bible teaching churches. But the majority of them do not make the right choice of receiving Christ as their Savior and Lord as well as becoming disciples of Jesus.

G. QUESTIONS

Which one would you like to be? A believer who received a salvation from the Lord Jesus, but doing nothing and barely making it into heaven? Or becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, who willingly makes a transition to be a better believer in Him; evaluates oneself clearly and seriously; submits to the commandments of the Lord through the Bible; carries out missions to tell others about Jesus; and transforms by the power of the Holy Spirit to bring glory and honor to Him?

No one can answer for you except yourself. You don't have a whole lot of time, because Jesus is coming back soon. Redeem the time and live for the Lord.