

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

### INTRO:

- **What's the difference between a convert and a disciple?**
  - A convert is one who turns around. This is the beginning of the journey, whereas discipleship is ongoing.
  - Most churches today are filled with a combination of unsaved people and converts.
- **Ask:** what is a disciple?
- **Answers given at a leadership conference:**
  - A disciple is a person who is becoming spiritually mature.
  - A disciple is a person who cares for the lost.
  - A disciple is a person who is doing life with others.
  - A disciple is a person who loves the poor.
  - A disciple is a person who is being sanctified so that he lives differently in this world.
  - A disciple is a person who worships God enthusiastically.
  - A disciple is a witness for Christ in every way.
- **Problem:** as a local church we need a unified understanding of our assignment.

**Matthew 28:16-20** – *“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>“Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the **nations, baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>“**teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”*

- **Note:** when a rabbi invited one to be his disciple, he was choosing among the ‘best of the best’ and saying, “You can do what I do!”
- **“make disciples”** – to be a disciple of one; to follow his precepts and instructions; to make a disciple; to teach, instruct.
  - To ‘make disciples’ one must first be a disciple!
- **“all the nations”** – ETHNOS.

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- **“baptizing”** – BAPTIZO. Not to be confused with 911, BAPTO. The clearest example that shows the meaning of BAPTIZO is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be ‘dipped’ (BAPTO) into boiling water and then ‘baptized’ (BAPTIZO) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change. ... When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. E.g. Mark 16:16. *‘He that believes and is baptized shall be saved’*. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle! [**Note:** it’s time to make pickles!]
- **“teaching”** – to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them; to impart instruction or instill doctrine into one; to explain or expound a thing.

**Luke 6:40** – *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.*

- **“disciple”** – MATHETES; one who follows the teaching of a master (teacher – not KURIOS); and learns by use & practice. [Root word indicates thought accompanied by endeavor]
  - In Jewish & traditional thought, discipleship was a matter of knowledge. A disciple attached himself to a master in order that, through instruction & experience, he could gain the knowledge that master had gained.
  - Early in the book of Acts (and in Christianity) the word “disciple” was discarded, and replaced by the term “believer.” This is because the emphasis that Jesus is looking for in disciples (students, learners, believers) is LIKENESS, not mere knowledge.
- **“perfectly trained”** - to render, i.e. to fit, sound, complete; to mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair; to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust; ethically: to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be.
- **Note:** “discipling” is ongoing. It is directed by the one doing the discipling, with much responsibility on the one being disciplined.

**John 8:30-36** – As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. <sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” <sup>32</sup>“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free?’” <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. <sup>35</sup>“And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. <sup>36</sup>“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

- **KJV Study Bible Note:** Jesus identifies the true disciples as those who:
  - Believed in Him (v. 30).
  - Continued in His word (v. 31).
  - Will be freed from sin by the truth (vv. 32–36).
  - They will not be sinless, but blameless—free from the power of sin.

**John 15:7, 8** – *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

- **#1 fruit** – LOVE!
- **Therefore**, it is strategic for disciples to love God & each other!

**A disciple** – a person who is following Christ, is being changed by Christ, and is committed to the mission of Christ.