

A Disciple Is More Than A Follower

Over the past 20 years, many people in the western world have moved away from calling themselves Christians and started calling themselves followers of Jesus. Is that all we are or are we something more than followers? Are we disciples? Today we talk about disciples and followers.

Introduction

In much of the western world, it has become quite common for Christians to call themselves followers of Jesus. It has been born out of a desire to move away from unfamiliar language and be more seeker-friendly. Many people think the term *Christian* has a negative connotation to it so they want to use something else. Follower of Jesus has become the most common term western Christians have adopted.

Now, don't get me wrong friends. I am not a person who is big on labels. Labeling people and categorizing them has never been one of the things I liked. I do not like being labeled and I am sure most of you do not either. Nonetheless, we are what and who we are and there is no shame in that when it defines us accurately.

The question is, does Jesus follower really define who we are? Does it really tell people that we belong to God through Jesus? We understand the thought process and concern. But we question if it really communicates the right message.

Many Followed Jesus

Many people have followed Jesus. We read throughout the gospels of the large crowds that followed Jesus wherever he went. Let's read what Jesus had to do because one crowd was so large and wanted to hear his teaching. Let's read Luke 5:1-3.

Luke 5:1-3

(1) One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. (2) He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. (3) He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

Jesus was being crowded by the people that were following him around. Instead of walking away, he wanted to continue to teach to them the Word of God. He got into a boat and had Simon, who would later have his name changed to Peter, push out a little bit away from shore so he could continue teaching all those gathered.

This isn't the first or last time Jesus had a large crowd around him. We read in both Matthew chapter 14 and Luke chapter 9 about Jesus teaching so long and people starting to get hungry that he tells his disciples to feed the 5000 people assembled listening to his teaching. This is one of the great miracles Jesus performed because he fed the assembled 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish from a young boy. The miracle is the amount of food left over for Jesus' disciples to eat was more than what they started with and everyone went away satisfied.



Another instance of a large crowd following Jesus is in a miracle account found in Mark chapter 5 and Luke chapter 8. A woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years reached out through the crowd following Jesus and touched the hem of his garment. She was instantly healed.

The point is Jesus was followed by thousands of people all the time. Jesus said something about all of these following him though. Let read Matthew 7:21-23.

Matthew 7:21-23

(21) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' (23) Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Jesus knew and was teaching the people that not everyone who was following him was going to make it into Heaven, even the people that were prophesying and performing what appeared to be miracles in Jesus' name. There are many reasons for this.

The chief reason is Jesus did not know them. Yes, they followed him for some time and started doing things in his name, but they were not doing what God had asked them to do. They were not doing the will of the Father in Heaven. They were more likely doing these things for their own benefit, notoriety, or power, not for God's glory. They were following Jesus but they were not a disciple.

A Disciple Is

Let's define what a disciple is. A disciple is defined as a follower or student of a teacher, leader, or philosopher. Let's read Luke 6:12-16

Luke 6:12-16

(12) One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. (13) When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: (14) Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, (15) Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, (16) Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

In verse 13 it says in the morning Jesus called his disciples to him and chose 12 of them whom he also designated as apostles. It is often thought Jesus only had 12 disciples. He did not. He had many more than that. He called 12 of them to be apostles, but he had many more disciples. We also read in Luke chapter 10 about Jesus sending out 70 disciples in teams of two to prepare the towns ahead for his arrival and teachings.

A disciple is like an apprentice who learns from a teacher or master and then starts to teach others. In other words, a disciple is self-replicating and is more than just a follower. Jesus was not the only one who had disciples. We read in Matthew chapter 11 and Luke chapter 7 about John the Baptist sending two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him a question. Disciples learn their master's craft or message and then share it with others making more disciples.



When Jesus is teaching that many will call Him Lord, Lord but he will not know them he is stating there is a distinct difference between a follower and a disciple.

Only Some Were Disciples

Jesus speaks to many who were just following him and not a true disciple. Let's read Luke 9:57-62

Luke 9:57-62

(57) As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." (58) Jesus replied, "**Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.**" (59) He said to another man, "**Follow me.**" But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." (60) Jesus said to him, "**Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.**" (61) Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." (62) Jesus replied, "**No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.**"

Not everyone who followed Jesus became a disciple. He had thousands following him, but many of those did not become disciples of his.

Being a disciple of Jesus is not always easy. There is a cost. You may lose family or friends. It may cost you your job or the way you make a living. It's easy to follow Jesus until things start getting hard. That's when the disciples stick to the mission God has called them to and the followers give up and go home.

Conclusion

Whether you call yourself a Christin, a Jesus follower, a disciple of Jesus, or something else is not important. Knowing that you are a true disciple of Jesus living out the calling God has on your life is what is important. Being a disciple of Jesus is far more important than being a follower of Jesus.

Disciples have made Jesus their Lord and accepted his salvation. Followers are along for the ride as long as the ride doesn't get too uncomfortable.

