



The Link

Vol 7, No 1(2005).

A quarterly non-denominational publication to the body of Christ

"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple". Luke 14:27 (NIV)



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EDITORIAL

Our praises goes to God for the opportunity He has given us to be able to reach you again after a little break due to challenges the enemy brought to hinder us in the past year. Our desire is to always overcome every situation and challenges, since we are on the winning side and be able to present the word of God to you continuously through this magazine and other media that God will give us.

The passion in our hearts in this edition is to encourage you to open your heart to seek and follow Christ with a renewed vigour and enthusiasm, and take on His very nature; that the Church will truly be a reflection of Christ. We are in an age where the world is trying its best to copy the Church; all the more reason while the Church in turn should become more like the one we profess, by reflecting the image of Jesus Christ to the world. By this men and women in the world will know we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, radiating His light in a crooked and perverse period.

This edition will make you to ask yourself again: "Who am I?" "Who do men say I am?" "What is God saying about me?" "Am I really regenerated?" In fact, you will have to do self-examination. "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5(NIV) "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD". Lam 3:40(NIV).

We trust the Lord that we will all be touched by the Almighty and be changed completely to follow Christ in a newness of life; we will be changed into His very image as we open our hearts to Him.

Thanks for your support, encouragement, understanding and above all your prayers. We also thank the Lord that he led us to start a monthly bulletin called ANCHOR recently and we trust Him that His word through this work will make your heart steadfast following the Lord.

On behalf of 'The Link Ministries' and her partners, I wish you a very pleasant experience and transformation this year and always. We will be glad to receive your testimonies and comments as you partake in what God is doing through this ministry, feel free to call and write us.

We love you dearly and pray that we will all be prepared as a part of a Church without spot or wrinkle which Christ is coming for in Jesus name (Amen).

Yours in His service,

Segun Ajayi

THE LINK is a non-denominational teaching magazine published quarterly and sent or delivered free to homes, churches, ministries, schools, establishment and (or) any believer that requests a copy. **THE LINK** carries no subscription or news-stand price. **IT MUST NOT BE SOLD.**

This publication is being financed as the Lord provides through a group of brethren.

We would like to know how this publication has been of blessings to you, please write or call us.

You can also send in your gift(s) in cash or kind to improve the quality of this publication. (Cheques/Money orders should be made payable to Segun Ajayi).

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Who Am I?

'Segun Ajayi

To understand oneself, there is a need to answer the above question. The instinct will be to say, I am Mr/Mrs/Miss so and so, a Christian, a graduate of xyz, a pastor, an evangelist, etc; and we can go on to run our CV as if running a script or giving an answer at an interview. However, the answer may not actually address the real issue of what you should be and your true state.

It is a common African proverb says "it is the back of someone's head that we can see, someone else sees our own". I can tell you that it is only God that can reveal your real personality in the light of His word.

May the Lord open us up through the discussion in this article to examine who we ought to be and be able to make necessary adjustment as our true personality is revealed in the light of God's word.

We should also be able to set appropriate priorities in life at the end of this discussion to determine what we should be before the Lord Jesus Christ returns to take His Church with Him.

Who I ought to be?

1. A disciple

The word disciple first appears in the pages of the scriptures in Isaiah 8:16 and the Lord was actually saying there that His law and promises should be preserved by His disciples. In this regard, disciples are a group of people taught and trained to keep and observe God's ways.

In the New Testament, when the Lord Jesus was manifested, the word, disciple, became prominent

and it is used to identify anyone who has decided to follow Christ. These were men and women that left all other things to follow Christ. Their loyalty to Christ takes precedence over all other loyalties. The disciples are men and women that are devoted, loyal and obedient followers of Christ. Nothing comes before Christ in the life of the disciples. The disciples voluntarily accept Christ as master and His teachings as commands. Being a disciple is a call to total involvement in the work of Christ. Disciples are also regarded as the salt of the earth.

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:33 (NIV)

"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:34-35, (NIV)

The life of a true disciple preserves God's counsel in the society by giving the society a righteous flavour. Why not ask yourself, "Am I a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have I allowed myself to be taught and trained to keep and observe His ways? Have I chosen to follow the Lord Jesus Christ wholeheartedly? Do I accept Christ as my Lord and master and accept His teaching as commands? Does my life radiate whom I claim to follow? Can I influence this society with a righteous flavour? Can Christ call me His disciple? Have I given myself up to follow Him?

2. A lover

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one anotherby this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love for one another" (John 13:34-35)

A lover is easy to recognize; Love is a virtue that is difficult to hide. If you love someone it will show in your conduct and the way you relate with that person. It becomes an all-consuming passion to seek the good of the person you love and make the person happy always. See a man or a woman in love and you see someone whose will and action is determined by a desire to be a blessing to the person he or she loves; Ready to serve, ready to keep, ready to satisfy the interest of his or her lover.

No wonder King Solomon sang *"Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned"*. Song 8:7(NIV)

If we are indeed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will have a depth of love for Him and for one another that cannot be quenched. There should not be fighting, strife, bitterness and all manner of things that the enemy can use to tear us apart. We will be ready to do the things that will make it obvious that we are indeed each other's lovers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember He once showed us the extent of His love; He died for us, His friends. He said there is no greater love than this. We will walk in love as Christ did and show love to one another.

"And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God". Eph 5:2(NIV)

We will not work ill to each other. *"Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law."* Rom 13:10(NIV)

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD." Lev 19:18(NIV)

Why not ask yourself, Am I a lover? Do I love my brethren? Do I seek the good of my brethren? I am ready to make appropriate sacrifice for the sake of my brethren?

God will help us. We need to have love for one another, even now. As we do this we will be known as Christ's followers and we will bring glory to our God.

3. A Christian

The followers of Jesus Christ were called disciples during the days of Jesus Christ ministry here on earth. They are regarded as learners, scholars and believers in Christ's teachings.. Thereafter, these disciples were called Christians at Antioch (Act 11:26), those that had been with Christ.

Many take the name Christian and attribute it to whom it does not rightly belong, but bearing the name without the reality of the experience of being with Christ is only self deception.

The word Christian comes from the Greek word "Christianos", meaning followers of Christ. It means to actually deny oneself and follow Christ in full commitment and obedience to His instructions as we can see in Matt 4:19-20 and as the Lord stated in Matt. 16:24.

To be His followers in essence means to be imitators of the Lord Jesus, His pupil and a learner of His

ways (see Matt. 10:24-25). We ought to be like the master and identify with Him in all things, even when we are called names and wrongly accused.

Christians are those who are not ashamed of Christ and are ready to bear all things for the sake of His name. Some years ago, Christians were called all manner of names 'S.U'. (*Suwegbe Union* – People that are morons), *gba were mesin* (people that are fanatics) and several other names. Quite a number of people were offended as a result of these labels and went back from following Christ. These days, it is becoming fashionable to be called Christians. Hence you need to actually understand and know who you actually believe since there is no other tests whereby your profession of being a follower of Christ can be proved.

Beloved as a result of becoming a disciple, a lover and being called a Christian, Christ should be seen in you. The life of Christ should have rubbed off on you. You and myself having become new creatures, our old life of sinning should be dealt with; we ought to be a new lump, not living in sin again.

We are to live an exemplary life (1Tim. 4:12). Our life should characterize our new relationship with Christ. In speech and in conduct, our lives should bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ who we claim we now follow. Let your good works be seen of men (Matt.5: 16).

Can you confidently declare who you are now? You do not need to merely declare it, your life and conduct should say it all. Men and women should see God through you. Your cars, doorpost, face cap or T-shirt are not the only thing that should say it.

Let your light so shine before men; you are an epistle being read daily by men.

The early Disciples of Christ did not need to **proclaim** to anyone who they were. Men and women **identified** them as those that were living the life of Christ as it was preached to them. Thus, in Antioch the people **declared** that the disciples are Christ-followers, "Christians".

How else can we be known as being with Christ? We need to live a life of love as we stated earlier, let us love one another. Our love will show that we belong to God. Love is of God. Anyone that loves is actually born of God (1John 4:7). Let us walk in love towards one another (Ephesians 5:2). By what we do to each other we can affirm our love for God and for one another. We will also be able to serve one another without all the rancour and fighting for supremacy and authority. Where love exists we will be able to labour for God and get results; where love of God and unity exist among brethren the Lord will commend His blessings (Psalm 133).

As Christ disciples, we will find it pleasurable to serve Him, labour for things of the kingdom, not because of the reward, but because we want to please the master who came and served and laboured tirelessly. Remember that we are even called unto a harvest, which is indeed plenteous (Matt. 9:37). I can assure you that the Lord, the master, is definitely faithful and will pay every man according to His labour and service (1Cor. 15:58, 1Cor. 9:8-10). As you labour in hope you will be partakers of your hope by being rewarded for your service; your labour is never in vain in the Lord.

The Lord, who we have identified with, is expecting us to consider the way we live, and He promised to come back for us. He said our hearts should not be troubled, as we believe in Him; He has gone to prepare place for us that He will come again and receive us unto himself so that where He is, we too can be (John 14:1-3).

When He shall come, He wants us to be like Him. The scripture says in 1John 3:3 that every man that has the hope of seeing Him should purify himself, as the Lord is pure.

The Lord is emphasizing to His church today He will come at an hour when they do not know (Luke 12:37-40). Blessed are you, if the Lord will meet you ready, waiting and watching for Him.

In that case, who am I? Your answer should be that you are a disciple, a lover and a Christian (Christ follower) waiting earnestly for the master, serving Him faithfully and watching the manner of life you live so that He can find you ready at His coming.

The Lord will want you to amend your life on the basis of His word that has actually described what you ought to be. As you consider yourself, please respond to Him today by making Him your Lord and master; He will be proud to dine with you at the Feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:8-9).

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Did Jesus Use a Modem?

Did Jesus use a modem, at the Sermon on the Mount?

Did He ever use a broadcast fax, to get His message out?

Did the disciples carry beepers, as they went out and about?

Did Jesus use a modem, at the sermon on the Mount?

Did the Apostle use a laptop, with lots of RAM and ROM?

Did he use an email alias such as Paul@Rome.com?

Did the man from Macedonia post an email saying "come?"

Did the Apostle use a laptop With lots of RAM and ROM?

Did Moses use a joystick at the parting of the sea?

Did he use a Satellite Guidance Tracking System to show him where to be?

Did he write the law on tablets, or are they really on CD?

Did Moses use a joystick at the parting of the sea?

Did Jesus really die for us that Friday on the tree?

Or was it just a hologram, a bit of wizardry? Can you download the video clip to play on your PC?

Did Jesus really die for us one day upon a tree?

If in your life, the voice of God is sometimes hard to hear.

With other voices calling, His doesn't touch your ear.

Then set aside the laptop and modem, unplug the fancy gear,

Open up that dusty Bible, and talk to Him in prayer.

Author Unknown

THE NEW WINESKIN

'Kunbi Ajayi

In Palestine, grapes were trampled and trodden to produce wine. If the wine was to be kept for some time a substance is added to it to give it body. Wine was stored in clay jars or wineskins. This is not peculiar to Palestine even in our hi-tech world of today the basis of the production of wine remain much the same, and of course it still has to be stored. I'm sure you will begin to wonder what this has to do with us as believers as most of us abstain from wine particularly when it is alcoholic. Today we Christians, who profess to be children of God, should also be disciples and followers of Christ. Christ is no longer here with us in the physical, hence we His followers, have become the vehicles through which He performs all His earthly activities. That is why we want to concern ourselves with the subject of wine and new wineskin.

Wine, the bible says was given to man by God (Hosea 2: 8-9) and this wine has to be kept in a wineskin. Now, what is a wineskin? A wineskin is a bag for holding and dispensing wine, made from the skin of a goat or another animal. In Bible times, wineskins are manufactured from whole animal hides. Jesus used the analogy of the wineskin to show that the Jewish legalism of the Old Testament was inflexible and out-dated. The old wineskin of Judaism could not contain the dynamic faith of Christianity. The new Christian faith is the new wine, which must be in the new wineskin. Since we are Christians, it is imperative that we become the new wineskin that carries the new wine.

Let us look at the reasons why this new wineskin is so important. Old wineskins are not called old because of age. They are old because once you use a wineskin to store wine, it cannot be used a second time again because the fermentation process would cause the old skin to burst and the wine would be lost (Mark 9:17, Mark 2:22, Luke 5:36-38). In Bible times, wineskins are manufactured from whole animal hides; in the same way at conversion, it is not a part of us that gets converted it is our whole human spirit that becomes renewed and made perfect after the image of Him that created us. It is not a partial thing; it is a complete and total change. The Bible says it is no longer I that live but Christ that lives in me, old things have passed away behold all things have become new. If that regeneration experience has taken place in you, the whole of you, "the animal hide" becomes the wineskin that stores the wine. The wine, an analogy of the newness of the life of Christ Jesus in this discourse, and the wineskin are so important. The quality of the wineskin goes a long way to determine the fate of the wine. Let us look at what Jesus has to say about this: "*neither do men put new wine in old bottles the wine runneth out and the bottles perish*" (Matt. 9:17)

"And no man putteth new wine in old bottles else the new wine durst burst, the bottles and the wine is spilled and the bottles marred" (Mark 2:22)

"But no man putted new wine into old bottle else the new wine will burst the bottle and the wine be spilled and the bottles perish" (Luke 5:37-38)

Brethren we can see the emphasis in all the Gospels "The bottles perish" (Matt. 9:17, Lk.5: 38) and "the bottles marred" (Mark 2:22); so brethren, the quality of life we live in Christ Jesus as Christians is very important. It is either we are his disciples or not. It is not possible for a spring to bring both forth hot and cold water. In the world today, we find people that claims to be Christians, they go to Church, shout Hallelujah, but they have not remove the foreskins of their heart. They profess a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof. Sadly, but true, that is the state of some of us believers. We are white washed wall, white washed sepulchre, and old wine skins. The Bible says "the bottles perish, the bottles marred" and that is why some of us that claim to be Christians may be in for a shocker on the judgment day except we repent and become genuinely converted.

A disciple does the bidding of the master, he keeps his property and profits with it (parable of the talent); he doesn't bury it, he doesn't allow it to spill. The Bible says "if you love me you will obey my commandments", they would keep the property of the master. We will keep the wine; we will not allow it to waste or spill. If you put new wine in an old bottle, which is a heart that is not regenerated, it will perish.

What is wine? What is its use?

Wine like we said at the beginning of this discourse is from the fruit of the Vine (Matt.26: 29, Mk. 14:25, Luke 22:18). To get it the grapes are trodden and trampled. The Bible says Jesus is the True Vine and we are the branches (John. 15:1-8) and when we abide in Him we bring forth much fruit (John 15:8).

As the fruit is trodden and trampled it becomes wine. He says when we abide in him we bear much fruits. Does the word fruit remind you of something? I hear you say converts. Yes, but we can still bear other fruits, the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22). As we begin to bear fruit the wine begins to flow, the anointing of the Spirit, the One that does the extraordinary. Remember that analogy in Eph. 5:18 "be not drink with wine where in it is excess but be filled with the Spirit"

What are the uses of the wine?

1 In worship (Ex.29:40, Num. 28:7, Lev. 23:13, Num. 15:6-7)

Wine is an essential aspect of worship. When you are a new wineskin you will be filled with the spirit. This will enable you to offer an acceptable worship unto him; in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24).

2 The wine cheers up and maketh glad the heart of man (Ps. 104:15).

Who does that better for a child of God than the comforting Holy Spirit?

(Continued on Page 13)

THE TRUE DISCIPLES

Rufus Oladosu

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him; if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32)

In the plan of God, there should be a progression, from believing or acceptance of Jesus as saviour to enlisting in the school of discipleship. This continuity, sadly to say, is often lacking in the commitment of the modern day believers. Whereas in the early church we read “And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly” (Acts 6:7); today we are largely multiplying converts. Hence the sharp contrasts in character, values and pursuits.

Many who profess to be Christians have no semblance with Christ. We cannot be scripturally correct to call a person a Christian who is not a disciple. For the disciples were called Christians when those outside the fold could see they lived Christ’s life (Act 11:26)

Who then is a disciple? A disciple is an active learner and follower of a master. A disciple of Christ hence is a man who by exercise of his volition accepts Jesus Christ as Lord not just as a saviour. He is a man who having received His offer of free gift of salvation, proceeds to learn of Him that He may become like Him in words and indeed (John 8:31). For a disciple is an extension of the life of the master.

His own life is swallowed up in the life of Christ as Paul testifies: *“I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20). Is this your testimony too?

For a disciple, there are yokes to throw OFF and destroy (yokes of afflictions and sin – Isaiah 10:27) and there is yoke to put ON, (the yoke of oneness with Christ – Matt 10:28). What is more, there are weights to jettison (Heb. 12:2) and there is a cross to carry (Matt. 10:38).

Only the true disciple knows the master, for he often sits at His feet to learn of Him. He can say with Paul; *“nevertheless I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed”* (2 Tim. 1:10). Due to this intimate fellowship with the master, true disciples can properly make Him known to others. “For they speak of what they have heard, seen with their eyes, looked upon and have handled, of the word of life” (1 John 1:1)

The disciples place premium on knowing Christ and making Him known to others at any price. And because of their uncompromising attitude in matter of the faith and morality, they stand out clearly in the society. Though they may be derided by the world as unbending, non-diplomatic, fanatical and out-of-fashion, when crisis come, they are often called upon to proffer solutions.

Moreover, only true disciples can experience the complete freedom *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:32,36). While many in desperation are running helter-skelter seeking deliverance, true disciples enjoy liberty that is available in Christ life by the Spirit of God. Only he whose life has been swallowed up by the life of the master with no room for the devil can experience total freedom (Ephesians 4: 27). *"For to whom ye yield yourself servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience into righteousness"* (Rom. 6:16) . The knowledge of the truth and proper response of obedience is the primary avenue of deliverance. To the degree one's natural life is swallowed up by Christ's supernatural life, shall the man be truly free. Whatever is yielded to devil by ignorance or consent is what he occupies. Satan is only as powerful as a man allows him to be in his life.

The aforementioned explain why Jesus has commanded us to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19)

Someone may then wonder why so many professing believers live a border – line life, never really knowing who they have believed and hence are robbed of the benefits of Christ life.

There are two primary reasons for this; the first is lack of presentation of whole counsel of God. The Christ many have come to know is only a great benefactor – who blesses, heals, delivers but demands no commitment or sacrifice. In our desperate bid to win converts, we often show the

people only a side of the coin. Of course, we know that a coin with only one side is a fake currency.

This is why the new generation Christians cannot handle either prosperity or adversity. When prosperity comes, they tend to forget God; and when adversity comes, they conclude God has forgotten them.

We should know and help others to know that Christ is either the Lord of all or not Lord at all

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). The new birth is not an end but rather an entrance into a new family and relationship that demand for commitment and sacrifices. We should not shun to receive or declare *"all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27). That is the only way we can live a balanced life.

The second reason for the border – line existence is that becoming a disciple is full of challenges. While salvation is free for all, there is a price to pay to become a true disciple of Christ. Many have seen these challenges and retreated while others are paying the price and are thus fulfilling God's purpose for their existence and calling. It is required of a disciple to deny himself *"And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23)

To deny oneself means- to renounce all self interest, self-dependence, and self-pursuits apart from God. This is where the fat meets the fire.

In self-denial, one by an act of will renounces claim over his life and loses it, as it were, to gain the life of Christ.

Nothing in life then matters anymore except what God demands. When this happens one will be able to say like Paul; "But none of these things move me, neither count I myself as dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). This is the crux of discipleship. Self-denial will deal a deathly blow to self-gratification and self-glory.

Moreover, a disciple is also required to make a bold confession of Christ – that is a public declaration of identification with the Christ. Jesus said: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my father which is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). Believing in Christ is not enough; you must not be ashamed or afraid to confess His Lordship over your life in spite of whatever the consequences that may arise.

The persecution that comes from identification with Christ, in word and deed, is a badge of honour.

Jesus said: "The disciple is not above his master nor the servant above his lord, if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub how much more shall they call them of his house hold" (Matt. 10:24-25). A disciple of Christ, like Moses of the old, esteems "the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). When the early disciples were beaten and forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus, the Bible records that "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and

daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Act 5:41-42).

In the light of the foregoing, those who hold tightly to what they have including their life cannot be disciples of Christ "so likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). What is in your hand or life today that is competing with Jesus? Let go of it and you will be filled with Christ life.

Remember also, that to be a disciple, Christ must hold a pre-eminent position in your life "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" Jesus said in (Matt. 10:37). There should be no rival throne in your heart. None should be permitted to countermand the command of God in your life.

As you read this magazine, you may begin to wonder how you could possibly measure up. We want you to know that Christ's grace is sufficient for you (2 Corinthians. 12:9). God Himself is our sufficiency (2 Corinthians. 3:5). God has never required of us any thing that His grace in our life cannot make possible. What we need to do is to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

Discipleship provides continuity, for a disciple is an extension of the life Christ. A true disciple is testimony to the world of the life transforming power that is available in Christ. There is a higher life beyond the mundane existence. Enter now into the school of discipleship for a highflying experience.

The Heartbeat of God

ZachOluwadara

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to man the nature of God and the kind of God we serve, a pure and a holy God. Jesus Christ also revealed to us that we need to seek Him and worship God in spirit and in truth. The desire in the heart of the Lord Jesus was to raise many men that will seek and worship His pure and Holy Father. During His lifetime He expounded the scriptures to the disciples to establish and ensure that they are grounded (rooted) in His word that will enable them to seek and worship God after He departs. We want to discuss a few of those teachings of the Lord Jesus that will help us to be focused at seeking and worshipping God in the midst of this generation:

1. Self Denial and Cross-Bearing

Jesus Christ told His disciples "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24)

For anyone to be come after Jesus, he must be ready to get to the place of the cross, forsake his sins, ask for the grace to sin no more and henceforth change from his way of life. He must separate himself from things he likes, separate himself from the perverse world and follow the footprints of Christ.

2. Leaving All

Anyone that will come after the master must leave all. Luke 14:33 says "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." In Luke 18:27, the Lord Jesus Christ

instructed the rich young ruler to sell all his goods and distribute to the poor; the man went away sorrowful. He couldn't part with the wealth. He might have been calculating the extent of his wealth and the way he got them and the pleasure he derived from the wealth he has acquired.

Peter said, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee". Have you left all? Are you still holding on to your way of life? Are there some things you cannot let go for the sake of Christ? Can you condescend in humility to follow Christ? Will you not let go of your position and height of achievement in the secular world for the purpose of following Christ? Remember He left His position in heaven and came to earth to die for you on the cross of Calvary. Consider this.

3. Steadfastness and Zealousness

Jesus Christ said to those who believed on Him: "If you continue in my words then are you my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Our Lord Jesus was steadfast despite all the persecution and danger of death ahead, he was firm, resolute and loyal to His Father throughout His lifetime. He was steadfast to the end. Jesus Christ was zealous throughout his lifetime. He said my meat is to do my father's work and finish it. He also said in John 5:17: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; He was ready to do the work of His Father. Difficult situations and circumstances, persecutions and oppositions should not make us leave Christ. Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:38: "I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from

His love; death can't, life can't. The Angels won't and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away, our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow" (NLB).

The early Church achieved so much despite the oppositions, perils and persecutions they went through because of their zeal to serve God and please the Father. Are you ready also to serve God

and go through any situation as may confront you. Remember Jesus comments: "The harvest is truly plenty but the labourers are few". Can God count on you? Our utmost passion and desire is to please Him, serve Him and finish His work. Be steadfast doing this work, be immovable, your labour is never in vain in Him (1 Corinthians 15:58).

A NEW WINESKIN

(Continued from page 8)

3 Wine is also used as medicine to revive the faint (2 Sam. 16:2). The Samaritan mixed oil and wine on the wounds of the traveller (Luke 10:34). Wine heals, it mends, it revives, and it cheers up. Can you hear of those function echoed in Isaiah 61:1-3? "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;*"

Do you know the intent of God for all this?

"That they may be called the tree of

righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that GOD might be glorified".

Dear brethren, that is the only reason for which you are implored to be a disciple. If you are a new wineskin, you will carry the wine, it wouldn't spill, it wouldn't waste; people will drink of it as your life spread forth the fragrance of the Lord. You would offer acceptable worship and help others to do same. You will heal, and you will revive the faint. Do you know that this wine is a gift from God (Hosea 2:8)? He wants to pour it into you, if only you are a new wine skin so that he can be glorified.

STUDY: A DISCIPLE INDEED

Odunayo Ogundipe

Introduction

Who actually can bear the title "disciple"?

Neither all who go to the church nor all who sympathize with Christ teachers, are disciples. What are the traits to look for in a disciple? Above all, are you one? Find out It is better to be sure. Can God also depend upon you to raise another disciple for Him? "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said: *"if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples"* (NIV). God bless you as you go through this study.

Who is a disciple?

1. A disciple is a disciplined follower of Jesus. He is an imitator of Jesus in all ways: in deed, in love, in character. He is also a burden bearer. He follows Jesus without reservation and without repentance.
2. The disciple is a learner (Matt 11:29). He is an apprentice of Jesus, taking instruction from Him. (John 5:19-21). A disciple is that fellow who hears the voice of his master and does what He says all throughout his life. A disciple is one who is ready to learn from His master and His people (John 10:27).
3. A disciple is a tied down colt for the master's use (Mark 11:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:21).

Origin & Purpose of a Disciple

Disciples were called as they had encounter with Jesus (John 1:39-45) e.g. Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathaniel. Disciples were chosen and ordained for the following purposes: Mark 3:14-19

1. That Christ might send them to preach the gospel, Mark 16:15. The gospel must be preached in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2, Acts 6:3-4)
2. To fellowship with one another, Psalm 100:2
3. To pray for the sick and heal the sick (James 5:15-16), deliver the oppressed, Mark 16:17-18, and bring rest to those in distress (2 Timothy 4:5).
4. To work miracles, Acts 3:1-10
5. To teach the word of God and doctrines of Christ.

The Goal of a Disciple

The goal of a disciple is to be like His master in all things, to live for Him and be His representative.

Note the following:

- He that is perfect or fully trained shall be like His master (Luke 6:40, Matt 23:15, John 13:16, John 15:20).
- He keeps his master's words, and living them out before men, He becomes an asset to his master's cause (John 13:17, John 15:13-19, John 13:35, John 14:21-24, Romans 13:9-10).
- He reproduces himself (2 Timothy 2:2).

Qualities of a Disciple

- i. Being born again (John 3:3-6, Romans 8:7-8)
- ii. Imitation of Christ
- iii. Daily follower-ship of Jesus Christ
- iv. Faithfulness
- v. Being with Jesus Christ

Challenges of a Disciple

The following are the challenges of a disciple:

- He must have the discipline for regular fasting (2 Corinthians 11:27, Matt 4:1-2)
- He is a champion at praying fervently (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Romans 12:12)
- He studies and meditates in the word constantly (Joshua 1:8, 2 Timothy 2:5, Psalm 119:9-11, 105, 130, James 1:22-25)
- Witnessing and sharing his testimonies with others
- Imitating the life of Christ daily (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- He must endure in all things (2 Timothy 2:3-5, James 1:12, 1 Corinthians 10:13)

The work of the Holy Spirit in a Disciple

Our Lord Jesus Christ has promised that all the works He did, we shall do also and greater works shall we do by the Holy Spirit (John 14:12). The Apostles of old did great works and performed great wonders. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we shall perform greater work in Jesus name. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit became resident in the life of every genuine disciple and such people did exploits for the kingdom of God. For example: Peter and John - Acts 3:1-7; Stephen - Acts 7:1-55; Philip - Acts 8:5-13.

A disciple must not joke with what the Holy Spirit is able to do. He must be filled with the Spirit all the time. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, Romans 8:14. For someone to remain a disciple forever, he must allow the Holy Spirit to dwell regularly in him.

The Lifestyle of a Disciple

A. Prayerfulness

"Prayer is not an easy way of getting what we want but the only way of becoming what God wants us to be" -S. Kennedy

No person is so high in position or in grace to be exempted from the obligation to pray. No person is too big to pray, no matter who he is or what office he holds.

Why disciples (particularly) should pray?

Jesus who is our perfect example prayed - Luke 11:1, Matt. 14:21-23.

Comments of Jesus - Jesus Christ said we are the branch and not the vine; so as a result of this, disciples must pray (John 15: 5, 16). Also He said greater works than the works He did we will do, so we must pray to achieve this (John 14:12-14).

The disciples of old prayed, so we also must pray. Behind the great acts of the disciples was devotion to prayers (Acts 1:14, 4:23, 44, 31, 33; Acts 6:1-4, 7). They benefited from their prayerfulness (Acts 13:2-3, 4:32; 5:14; 6:7).

B. Holiness

Holiness separates a saint from a sinner. This will show to the people of the world that a disciple is different. Every sinner is still in the fallen state of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3: 9-10). Holiness opens the door for the disciple before God (Hebrews 12:14) and also prepares the disciple of Christ for the coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:13; Matthew 22:11-14).

How to live a life of Holiness?

1. Continuous and constant life of obedience (Matthew 4:18-20, Matthew 19:16-24)
2. You must be prayerful and knowledgeable (knowledge of the word of God) (Ephesians 5:26-27; Isaiah 40:27-31)
3. You must be watchful and determine to live a life of consecration (Judges 16:1-31; 2 Kings 5:20-27; 2 Kings 5:20-27). Samson and Gehazi as a case study.
4. You must know how to manage success (Luke 12:16-20)

Orderly and Godly lifestyle

A disciple must live an orderly and godly lifestyle that radiates the glory of God and exemplary for others to learn from. This will also be shown in whatever role or capacity the disciple finds himself or herself. We want to take the home as a case study, since we all function in the home as a husband, wife or child.

As a husband (Gen 1:26; Ephesians 5:23-25), a disciple as the head of the home must live an exemplary life; He must live by the instructions he gives and what he teaches. He is also expected to live a life that shows his faith in God. He must be able to lead his family to God and trust God to meet the needs of the home continually. He must create time for his family and provide always an atmosphere where God's love is shown to everyone. The need of everyone in the home should be taken care of. He is also expected to protect the family and exercise loving discipline to everyone in the family.

As a wife (Titus 2:4-5, Proverbs 14:1), a disciple must be a partner to keep the home. She is expected to submit to her husband. She must raise her children in a Godly way (Titus 2:14). She is expected to give sound counsel to her husband (Proverbs 31:23) and spend time in prayer for him.

As a child (Psalm 127:3), a disciple is the heritage of the Lord. He or she should be taught in the way of the Lord, corrected but not provoked. His or her needs should be provided for. As a disciple, he or she should be subject to the discipline of the parents (Proverbs 29:15). He or she should live an exemplary life despite the fact of being a youth.

D. A soaring life, like that of an eagle

A disciple must live the life that demonstrates the characteristics we can liken to that of an eagle.

Let us quickly consider some characteristic of the eagle.

Eagle is a powerful bird, with an enormous strength; it flies with authority and exercise dominion in the sky. Disciples ought to live as children of God, kings and queens, exercising dominion and wielding God's authority as is supposed to be at the beginning (Genesis 1:28, 1 Peter 2:9).

Eagles do not eat carcasses. They do not eat anything that dies of itself. They eat living things. Disciples are expected to feed continually on the living word of God. The word of God is forever living.

Eagle live in the highest point available in the environment. They live on mountaintops. The life of

a disciple should be above the standards of the world. God will expect a disciple to live above sin. Sin is in the valley (Ephesians 2:1-6).

Most birds fly away screaming when a storm is imminent, but an eagle faces a storm, raises its wings, and rises up with the storm to a higher height. (See 1 Samuel 17:48-49). An eagle rides on the storm. A disciple should be ready to face challenges of life, trials of life and not run away when the going is tough. The trial of faith in the life of disciple is of value; it works patience (James 1:2-4). The Lord will strengthen in any situation.

An eagle dies at an old age. It stays on the mountaintop and faces the sun until it dies. A disciple should live long and throughout his lifetime remain focused on the King of kings, facing the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4: 2). He should be focused on eternity and have the hope of seeing the Lord.

Are you a disciple indeed? Use this study to judge yourself and make appropriate amendment. God bless you.

STORIES FOR THE HEART

Does God Still Speak To Us?

A young man had been to Wednesday night Bible Study. The Pastor had shared about listening to God and obeying the Lord's voice. The young man couldn't help but wonder, "Does God still speak to people?"

After service he went out with some friends for coffee and pie and they discussed the message. Several different ones talked about how God had led them in different ways. It was about ten o'clock when the young man started driving home. Sitting in his car, he just began to pray, "God, if you still speak to people speak to me. I will listen. I will do my best to obey." As he drove down the main street of his town, he had the strangest thought, "stop and buy a gallon of milk". He shook his head and said out loud, "God is that you?" He didn't get a reply and started on toward home. But again, the thought, buy a gallon of milk; The young man thought about Samuel and how he didn't recognize the voice of God, and how little Samuel ran to Eli. "Okay, God, in case that is you, I will buy the milk." It didn't seem like too hard a test of obedience. He could always use the milk. He stopped and purchased the gallon of milk and started off toward home.

As he passed Seventh Street, he again felt the urge, "Turn down that street." This is crazy he thought and drove on pass the intersection. Again, he felt that he should turn down Seventh Street. At the next intersection, he turned back and headed down Seventh. Half jokingly, he said out loud, "Okay, God, I will."

He drove several blocks, when suddenly, he felt like he should stop. He pulled over to the curb and looked around. He was in semi-commercial area of town. It wasn't the best but it wasn't the worst of neighborhoods either. The businesses were closed and most of the houses looked dark like the people were already in bed. Again, he sensed something, "Go and give the milk to the people in the house across the street." The young man looked at the house. It was dark and it looked like the people were either gone or they were already asleep. He started to open the door and then sat back in the car seat. "Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep and if I wake them up, they are going to be mad and I will look stupid." Again, he felt like he should go and

give the milk. Finally, he opened the door, "Okay God, if this is you, I will go to the door and I will give them the milk. If you want me to look like a crazy person, okay. I want to be obedient. I guess that will count for something but if they don't answer right away, I am out of here."

He walked across the street and rang the bell. He could hear some noise inside. A man's voice yelled out, "Who is it? What do you want?" Then the door opened before the young man could get away. The man was standing there in his jeans and T-shirt. He looked like he just got out of bed. He had a strange look on his face and he didn't seem to happy to have some stranger standing on his doorstep. "What is it?" The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, "Here, I brought this to you."

The man took the milk and rushed down a hallway speaking loudly in Spanish. Then from down the hall came a woman carrying the milk toward the kitchen. The man was following her holding a baby. The baby was crying. The man had tears streaming down his face. The man began speaking and half crying, "We were just praying. We had some big bills this month and we ran out of money. We didn't have any milk for our baby. I was just praying and asking God to show me how to get some milk." His wife yelled out in the kitchen, "I ask him to send an Angel with some. Are you an Angel?"

The young man reached into his wallet and pulled out all the money he had on him and put in the man's hand. He turned and walked back toward his car and the tears were streaming down his face. He knew that God still answers prayers.

Author unknown

We Have a Choice

Jerry was the kind of guy you love to hate. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

He was a unique manager because he had several waiters who had followed him around from club to club. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested. "Yes it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, I left the club industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Jerry did something you are never supposed to do in any restaurant business: he left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers.

While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found relatively quickly and rushed the local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body. I saw Jerry about six months after the accident.

When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?" I

declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door." Jerry replied. "Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked. Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'He's a dead man.'"

"I knew I needed to take action." "What did you do?" I asked. "Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply."

I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

Olympic Swimmer

In 1967 while taking a class in photography at the University of Cincinnati, I became acquainted with a young man named Charles Murray who also was a student at the school and training for the summer Olympics of 1968 as a high diver.

Charles was very patient with me as I would speak to him for hours about Jesus Christ and how He had saved me. Charles was not raised in a home that attended any kind of church, so all that I had to tell him was a fascination to him. He even began to ask questions about forgiveness of sin.

Finally the day came that I put a question to him; I asked if he realized his own need of a Redeemer and if he was ready to trust Christ as his own Savior. I

saw his countenance fall and the guilt in his face. But his reply was a strong "no."

In the days that followed he was quiet and often I felt that he was avoiding me, until I got a phone call and it was Charles. He wanted to know where to look in the New Testament for some verses that I had given him about salvation. I gave him the reference to several passages and asked if I could meet with him. He declined my offer and thanked me for the scripture. I could tell that he was greatly troubled, but I did not know where he was or how to help him. Because he was training for the Olympic games, Charles had special privileges at the University pool facilities. Some time between 10:30 and 11:00 that evening he decided to go swim and perform a few dives. It was a clear night in October and the moon was big and bright. The University pool was housed under a ceiling of glass panes so the moon shone bright across the top of the wall in the pool area.

Charles climbed to the highest platform to take his first dive. At that moment the Spirit of God began to convict him of his sins. All the scripture he had read, all the occasions of witnessing to him about Christ flooded his mind. He stood on the platform backwards to make his dive, spread his arms to gather his balance, looked up to the wall and saw his own shadow caused by the light of the moon. It was the shape of a cross. He could bear the burden of his sin no longer. His heart broke and he sat down on the platform and asked God to forgive him and save him. He trusted Jesus Christ twenty feet in the air.

Suddenly, the lights in the pool area came on. The attendant had come in to check the pool. As Charles looked down from his platform he saw an empty pool that had been drained for repairs. He had almost plummeted to his death, but the cross had stopped him from disaster.

Source unknown

HEAVEN'S GATE

IF YOU WERE STANDING AT THE GATE OF HEAVEN AND GOD ASKED YOU ...



WHAT WOULD YOU TELL HIM?



WELL, I THINK I LIVED A PRETTY GOOD LIFE.

BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL THE WRONG THINGS YOU DID?



WELL, MAYBE I DIDN'T ALWAYS TRY MY BEST, BUT I WAS SINCERE!

SINCERE? WHAT IS SINCERITY WORTH?



OH, THOSE. WELL, I TRIED MY BEST, DIDN'T I?

OH REALLY?

WHAT ABOUT THE TIME ...

I KNOW! I KNOW! DON'T REMIND ME.



YOU CAN BE SINCERELY WRONG, CAN'T YOU?

WELL, YES.

SO SINCERITY REALLY ISN'T THE ISSUE. LET'S GET BACK TO THE QUESTION AT HAND.



WHY SHOULD I LET YOU IN?

WELL, I WENT TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY OF MY LIFE THROUGH SNOW AND SLEET AND RAIN ...

YAWN!



GOOD BYE!

POOF

WAIT A MINUTE!



SAVE ME!



WHAT MUST I DO TO BE ...

WHAT'S THIS? A BIBLE?



DOESN'T ALL THAT EFFORT COUNT FOR SOMETHING?

I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH.



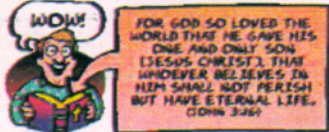
WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?



WOW! LOOK AT THIS!

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? ... BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED. (ACTS 16:30, 31)

YOU SEE, GOD LOVES YOU AND REALLY WANTS TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.



WOW!

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON (JESUS CHRIST), THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (JOHN 3:16)

BUT OUR PROBLEM IS ... SIN SEPARATES US FROM GOD'S LOVE.



BUT YOUR INTUITIVES HAVE SEPARATED YOU FROM YOUR GOD, YOUR SINS HAVE HIDDEN HIS FACE FROM YOU, SO THAT HE WILL NOT HEAR.

WOW!

JESUS CHRIST CAME TO FREE US FROM SIN, AND TO BRING US INTO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THE FATHER BY GIVING UP HIS LIFE ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS AND RISING AGAIN.



WOW!

FOR CHRIST DIED FOR SINS ONCE FOR ALL THE UNRIGHTEOUS TO BRING YOU TO GOD. (1 PETER 2:24)

SO TO GET INTO HEAVEN, WE SIMPLY NEED TO TRUST JESUS CHRIST AS OUR PERSONAL SAVIOR, DEPENDING ON HIM ALONE FOR SALVATION.



BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED. (ACTS 16:30)

LORD, I BELIEVE!



IF YOU HAVE TRUSTED CHRIST AFTER READING THIS, PLEASE CONTACT US AT THE ADDRESS BELOW.

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