

Are You a Disciple of Jesus?

Kenny Hodges

Becoming a child of God happens in an instant, the moment we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Discipleship, on the other hand, is a lifelong process!

Everyone enters the family of God as a newborn spiritual baby. Growth as a child of God is very similar to the growth of a physical baby. As a newborn is nourished and loved, he or she begins to grow. Slowly they learn to crawl, walk, and eventually, if the growth process is normal, they learn to run. During the process, they begin to learn self-control and discipline and how to think and reason. They move from being totally dependent on a caregiver to being able to care for themselves and to make their own decisions.

Discipleship for the believer in Jesus Christ follows the same pattern. The apostle Peter tells us, *“Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”* (1 Peter 2:2).

However, discipleship is not automatic! The writer of the book of Hebrews warns that we must be careful to nourish ourselves spiritually in order to grow. Hebrews 5:13-14 tells us, *“For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”*

You probably noticed the words ‘practice’ and ‘trained’ in this verse. There must be a commitment to spend time in the Word if we are to grow as believers. Milk is wonderful... but if we do not move on to solid food, we are mal-nourished and will never become mature.

The Word of God is obviously the primary basis for our spiritual growth. However, as we learn God’s Word we find that there are several other disciplines that are necessary for continued growth. We will see that prayer is essential in our relationship to God. Interacting with other believers, what the Bible calls fellowship, is also an important step in our growth process. As we mature in Christ, we should have the goal of being able to begin the discipleship process with other believers who are beginning to grow.

You may be thinking, “Is it worth the effort to become a disciple of Jesus?” The truth is that believers fall into several categories. Some trust Jesus Christ and receive the gift of eternal life and are very excited about their relationship with Him. They plug into a good church and find someone to help them grow. Others begin in the same way but for whatever reasons never really begin or complete the process. They remain “spiritual babes.” The Bible tells us that some wait eagerly for His return while others shrink back because they are ashamed. You must decide which category you want to be in. It is my prayer that you want to hear Jesus say to you at His appearing, “Well done good and faithful servant.” If that is your desire, then you have made the first step down the road of discipleship. You can be certain that this is God’s will for you and that as you pursue getting to know Him more, He will help you each and every step of the way.

Discipleship, however, is not easy. As a matter of fact, several times Jesus warns about the cost of discipleship. In Luke 9:57-62 Jesus sums up a passage where “would be disciples” give a number of excuses by saying, *“No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”* Later in Luke 14:25-35, He warns a large crowd that is following him that they should count the

cost of discipleship. In verse 33 He states, *“So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”* His point is that a disciple is one who has given up his personal rights and submitted to God’s ownership, leading, and provision.

The cost for becoming a child of God is settled forever by the finished work of Christ. Concerning *entrance* into His kingdom Christ says,

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.” (Revelation 22:17)

However, *inheritance* in the kingdom is only promised to the faithful disciple who counts the cost and then runs the race with endurance. Turn to and read carefully Hebrews 12:1-11. Notice that discipleship is likened to a race that must be run with endurance and discipline. It is a race that is run with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. The reward is *“the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”*

Do you have on your jogging shoes? Are you ready to start the race? It won’t be easy. There may be days you wonder, “Why am I doing this, or is it really worth the effort?” However, if you make the commitment and stay the course, your reward will be greater than you can imagine. Hear the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18:

“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Focusing on Jesus and keeping an eternal perspective will give you the motivation and the strength to become a faithful disciple. Discipleship is a heart matter. It is a decision you must make. It is a commitment to Christ that you will follow Him faithfully. The wonderful news is that once you make the commitment, you are not alone. God promises us that the indwelling Holy Spirit will give us the strength and ability to serve Him faithfully. Will it be worth it? Absolutely! What greater joy could there be than to here Jesus say, “Well done good and faithful servant!”

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