

Real Christ-follower: Disciple and Missioner

Matthew 28:18-20

MPS Christ-followers live by power of Holy Spirit to apply gospel truth to all of life and share it with all people.

OBJ Every person can understand the new identity of a real Christ-follower by four core elements.

INTRO

Q? How clearly do you understand how to apply the gospel to your Christian life, and share it with others?

Last week we established that when Jesus saves us, we are made a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17) **Two passages shape a faithful understanding of this new identity in Christ.** Last week we considered the first of these two passages from Matthew 22:37-40, known as the Great Commandment, to learn the first two core elements of our new identity in Christ, Worshiper and Servant. The life of a real Christ-follower is always first and most about engaging the heart to grow an all-consuming love for God and engaging our hands to serve and show God's love to others. This week we consider the last two core elements of our new identity in Christ.

OBJ Four Core elements shape our new identity as a Christ-follower, and how we are to live for Him. Today we will look at the last two Core Elements, Disciple and Missioner.

Christ-followers live by the power of Holy Spirit to apply gospel truth to all of life and share it with all people.

READ Matthew 28:18-20 The Great Commission

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20

These verses record some of Jesus' last words to His disciples on earth, known as the Great Commission, and capture what Jesus commands His disciples to be about as long as He tarries and until He returns. We will consider this text today by identifying who Jesus is speaking to and by what He commands.

The third core element of a Christ-follower's identity is that we are Jesus' DISCIPLE.

Jesus is speaking to his disciples. One must BE a disciple of Jesus to make more disciples of Jesus. The word "disciple" is not unique to Christianity but refers to anyone who has a follower that 'seeks to learn from in order to become like' the one they follow. The word "disciple" holds a dual meaning of "learn and follow" that synergizes into one new understanding to become like the master. Change is inherent in the meaning as one engages in a process to become like their master. **A true, Biblical disciple is one follows Jesus to become more like Him.**

The New Testament uses the Greek word for "disciple" (*mathetes*) for different types of people who followed Jesus. "Disciple" refers to the twelve who would become Jesus' Apostles, to a very close group of men and women who spent most of their time with Jesus, to those in the crowd who were genuinely converted and adhered to Jesus' teaching, and also to large crowds that followed him wherever he went, and even to refer to those who showed they were never truly saved because they turned to no longer follow Jesus because of His hard teachings (John 6:6). **So, being careful to define what kind of disciple we are speaking of is important for us today.**

Four Qualities of our identity as a DISCIPLE:

1. Becoming a Disciple of Jesus begins by the confession, "Jesus is Lord".

When Peter preached at Pentecost, he made clear that a disciple of Jesus begins by the confession "Jesus is Lord". (Acts 2:36) Paul also teaches this in Romans 10:9-10, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth



one confesses and is saved.” Later in his letter, Peter exhorts believers, “*but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you*.” (1 Peter 3:15)
 The matter is very simple: you will only fully devote your life to Jesus once you have settled in your heart that He is Lord.

2. Following Jesus demands one deny self first. Luke 9:23-24

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Luke 9:23-24

The spirit of humility a Christ-follower adopts as a Worshiper produces self-denial as a Disciple to obey Jesus. Far too often we try to “negotiate our discipleship”. We want to know what Jesus wants from us first before we make any commitments to obey. This is why people turned back from following Jesus in John 6:66, because they reached the point where they were no longer willing to deny self. But the person who has settled in their heart that Jesus is Lord no longer negotiates. Instead, whatever He commands to whatever extend of His command, we deny self to trust Him and obey. Christ-followers “count the cost” of following Jesus, knowing that He alone is our life (John 6:68), so we live dead to self and alive unto God in Him (Galatians 2:20), so that we deny self daily to take up our cross and follow Him by faith.

3. The discipleship process produces Christlikeness by God’s truth renewing the mind. Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

Growth in the Christian life often gets confused with activity; if I attend or participate, then I grow. The problem is that we too often give priority to growth as the end result. But growth is not the purpose of growth, maturity is. The discipleship process—learn and follow—begins by the intake of God’s Word to renew one’s thinking in light of truth. You will never live differently from the world until you think distinctively of Jesus Christ. Then, truth gets applied to the daily walk of life by Spirit-fueled discernment to know God’s will so one can walk by faith. This is the process of sanctification. Crowdsourcing, group-think, and such, are shunned because while it is true that knowledge changes you, only truth transforms you into Christ’s likeness.

4. A disciple sees their life and the whole world differently as they become more like Jesus.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

2 Corinthians 5:14-16

Just as a Christ-follower relates to other people differently because we have received God’s love, so the gospel trains one to think differently of others, and all things. The main difference the gospel makes in our thinking is that instead of seeing the world to make our life better or happier, we see our life here to make Christ known. This is how a renewed mind thinks, the fruit of the discipleship process, maturity of genuine Christlikeness. When Christ’s love controls you, the more you live like Jesus, to sacrifice self so others can come to know Jesus.

As Disciples, we engage the mind to be renewed by the gospel truths of God’s Word and walk by faith in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q? In our culture where Christianity remains widely accepted, the question before each of us is NOT “Am I a disciple?”, but rather, “What kind of disciple am I?” Ask yourself, “Who or what am I following to become like?” Are you in the crowd, but ready to walk away when hard teachings arise? Or, are you ready to deny self regardless of what following Jesus costs?

TRANS And just as God’s love sends us into the world to show that love to others, so the gospel sends us into the world to share the truth of the living Word of God—the Lord Jesus Christ—who has come to set people free from sin.

The fourth core element of a Christ-follower’s identity is MISSIONER.

If the Great Commission teaches us anything, it shows us that the work of the gospel for God’s Kingdom mission is not for the special few, but for all who call on the Name of the Lord. Maturity in Christlikeness that flows from the discipleship



process leads one to understand and embrace their personal responsibility for serving the Great Commission.

Three Qualities of our identity as a MISSIONER:

1. Christ-followers live as an Ambassador under divine authority to serve the gospel in all of life.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20

Paul is clear about the responsibility of every follower of Jesus Christ; each one is His Ambassador. Christ-follower, God's plan for gospel mission is to make His appeal to the world through you. You may ask, "But what can I do?" (I am so glad you asked!) Make sure you are growing to maturity as a disciple of Jesus. And serve, to make sure others around you are doing the same. Then, from that process, by Holy Spirit empowering you to discern God's Will, obey. **As an Ambassador, are you faithfully representing Christ everywhere you go? You don't have to ask for permission and you need nothing more; Jesus has given you His authority to serve the gospel to make disciples now.**

2. Christ-followers walk by the power of the Holy Spirit to serve as God's witness on earth.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,

and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

The Holy Spirit that works within you to discern God's will for life also empowers you to walk in obedience to God's Will. Start here: **As a witness, are you telling others about Jesus?** "But I don't know what to say", many respond. Would you believe that you don't have to know what to say, in a very real way. First, your testimony of what Jesus has done for you is a great place to start. Then, how Jesus did for you on the cross is a great way to share with others that He has died for their sin too. But of greatest confidence is this: if you will just trust the Lord, Holy Spirit will fill your heart and mind to overflow from your lips what He wants to testify through you. (Luke 21:15) God has done this all through the Bible; Moses, Peter, Saul, just to name a few. And He will do it through you. One step or moment of faithfulness by you will be used by the Lord and multiplied beyond any measure you could imagine.

3. Christ-followers live SENT to share the gospel with others at all times to make more disciples.

Finally, for the Christ-follower, the "Go" of the Great Commission defines the all-encompassing impulse of life. The first word of verse 19 is a prepositional phrase, "As you go..." It means that you are not simply being told to get up and go once or only to one place. Rather, the Great Commission teaches every Christ-follower that as you go about all of life, and the way you plan the "going about" of your life, in lifestyle patterns and everything in which you participate, do it like Jesus intentionally sent you there for Him. This is what it means to "Live SENT"! And SENT is the way every follower of Jesus is authorized by Him to live, at all times.

After declaring, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.", Paul poses the question, "**HOW will they call on Him in whom they have not believed...of whom they have never heard...without someone preaching...who is sent?**" He then quotes Isaiah in declaring, "How beautiful are the feet of those who (share) the good news!" (Romans 10:14-15) This phrase provides a beautiful testimony to a life completely surrendered to serve Jesus by going in His Name wherever He leads so others can know eternal life with God.

Christ-followers are Missioners who engage the feet to share the gospel with others everywhere we go in life so they can believe in Jesus and be saved.

Jesus makes every person who trusts in Him by the gospel a new creation to center our whole life on Him.

Q? Christian, ask yourself, "**Is my discipleship producing greater sacrifice of self to serve so others can hear and live?**" **If not, whose image are you being made in? Christlikeness always leads us to the nations to make Jesus name known!**

