

Discipleship

You will often hear the term 'discipleship' used in Christian contexts. A disciple is a student of a teacher or one who follows his master. This study is to help you understand how discipleship outworks in your life. There are two important aspects to grasp. The first is what this means in terms of your commitment to God and the second, what this means in terms of God's commitment to you.

Your commitment to Jesus

Pete: It was the summer before my last year at university and I began to consider what to do with the rest of my life. I had been a Christian for 2 years and I knew that faith in God was central to my future. I had some idea of what I would like to do but did not know God's plans. Over this summer period I went on a trip to North Africa with some other believers. We travelled through areas where there were no known believers. So we would pray together and look at God's word. One morning whilst in a mountainous area, I went to sit on a rock some way from our camp just to be by myself. It was one of those moments where it was just God and me. I sensed God was asking me something and I needed to respond. He was asking me if I would give my future to him. I struggled somewhat with this because I would like to say yes but still keep some independence. Yet I also knew somewhere inside me that you can't bargain with God. I came across this next verse and it gave no room for independence:-

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.'

So under some conviction, even though there were conflicting emotions within me, I said yes to God and to whatever he wanted me to do. I would even come to this difficult country and learn the language and become a missionary. That was an important moment. He didn't ask me to become a missionary in that country; in fact the road he led me on was not what I would have expected. What was going on during those moments on that rock was simply that I was acknowledging him as my master and that I was his disciple. These next few verses highlight the importance of giving all of your future to him:-

A disciple of Jesus obeys His words.

John 8:31-32

'Jesus said to the Jews who believed him, "If you abide in my word you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free'

A disciple is one who gives up everything for his master.

Luke 14:33

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

Matthew 16:24

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

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Jesus's commitment to His disciples

Pip and I often look back over the years and marvel. We have been through many adventures; some in dangerous and difficult situations. We have been in great need and also times of great despair. There have been times when it seemed others had control over our lives and we had no say in our affairs; there have been times when we've even wished life would end; times when the future looked very bleak; times when we hated living in this world and certainly times when we just did not want to do this '*following God*' thing anymore. Yet as we reflect on the past we can see that in all circumstances, God has brought us through. Such difficult times are common to many. They come from battling in a dark world occupied by Satan and whilst wanting to reflect the life and hope we have in God. We know that the only reason we are still here and with faith stronger than it has ever been is because of his commitment to us, his invisible hand at work in and around us. These next few verses express that commitment of God to his disciples.

He promised that if you do 'whatever' for him, he will provide for 'whatever' you need.

John 15:14-17

'You are My Friends if you do WHATEVER I command you. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made know to you. You did not chose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that WHATEVER you ask the Father in My name He may give you'

He promised to always be with us.

Matthew 28:18-20

'And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, 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'.

This verse above has a central place in the life of the church. God promises not only to be with us always but he also gives a central command to his church to make disciples of all people groups across the world. In fact **Matthew 24:14** comes with a promise that when the gospel is preached to all peoples, then this age will come to an end.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

God's reward for your obedience to him extends into eternity.

This is an important fact to realise. In short every act of faithfulness to God in your life will be rewarded eternally. Your commitment to God is building up for you an eternal reward. God will eternally honour your faithfulness.

Luke 18:28-30

'Then Peter said, 'see we have left all and followed you.' So He said to them, 'assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the

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sake of the Kingdom of God who shall not receive many times more in this present age, and in the age to come eternal life'.

The Road of Discipleship

Growing in discipleship is a step by step, choice by choice process. Life throws up all sorts of situations that require you to make decisions and choices. Being a disciple means as those decisions and choices have to be made, you choose the will and way of God above all the alternatives. This will not always be easy – God never promised an easy life for his disciples. When you do not know the will of God in a particular situation simply ask God to reveal it to you – seek answers from the Bible; ask older believers for their wisdom ... God is 100% for you as his child so expect him to lead, even if you have to wait for the answer.