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# **Genuine Discipleship**

## **JOHN 8:31-32**

### **Introduction**

1. The majority of us in this room tonight wear a certain title which identifies us as belonging to Jesus Christ — Christian.

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2. However, did you know that this word is found only three times in all of the New Testament:

“and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26, NASB95)

“Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”” (Acts 26:28, NASB95)

“but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.” (1 Peter 4:16, NASB95)

3. Another word used 11 times in Scripture to identify those of us who belong to Christ — it is the word “believer” (Acts 5:14; 10:45; 16:1; 2 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:10; 1 Timothy 4:10; 5:16; 6:2 (2); 1 Peter 1:21).
4. The word most used in Scripture identify those of us who belong to our Lord is the word “disciple” and we find it 30 times in the book of Acts:
  - a. In Acts 11:26, Luke informs us that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

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- b. Four times, specific disciples are mentioned by name:
- 1) “Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias” (Acts 9:10).
  - 2) “Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas) . . .” (Acts 9:36).
  - 3) “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:1).
  - 4) “Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge” (Acts 21:16).
5. Jesus uses the word as He speaks to “those Jews who had believed Him,” saying, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31).
6. The word “disciple” (*mathētēs*) means someone who is a learner, a student, a pupil, an apprentice or a follower.
- “A pupil (disciple) is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” (Luke 6:40, NASB95)
7. In our text, Jesus spoke of the qualifications of those who would be “true disciples” of Himself.
8. In our lesson tonight, I would like for us to consider what is involved in “Genuine Discipleship.”

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## I. Genuine Discipleship . . .

### A. BEGINS WITH BELIEF

“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him” (v. 31a).

1. In John 6, we read of a number of Jesus' disciples who, after Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 in Bethsaida had followed Him back to Capernaum.
2. There, as we see in John 6:40, Jesus told them that "everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life" and that He Himself would "raise [that person] up on the last day."
3. In the next verse, He said that He was "the living bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:41).
4. A few verses later, in John 6:56, He said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."
5. This caused "many of His disciples" to grumble (v. 61) because they considered His words difficult and hard to listen to (v. 60).
6. As a result, "many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him" (John 6:66, ESV).
7. Here, in John 8:31, John tells us that were those Jews who "believed Him".
8. As we noticed last week, Jesus said in John 8:24, "unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."
9. Now He tells them, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (v. 31).

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10. So, to be a genuine disciple of Jesus we must believe in Him and what He says about . . .
  - a. Himself as the Son of God and Savior of the World
    - "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).
    - "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me" (John 10:37).
    - "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"

(Luke 19:10).

b. The love of God (John 3:16)

c. The dangers of sin

“ . . . everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34).

d. The real meaning of life

“not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions” (Luke 12:22).

“ . . . whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:35).

“ . . . whoever believes will in Him have eternal life” (John 3:15).

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### **B. REQUIRES A CONSTANT ABIDING IN JESUS’ WORD**

“If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples” (v. 31b, NKJV).

1. To “abide” or “continue” in Christ’s word means that we “live or dwell in” His word.
2. It is the place we choose to “remain” on a consistent basis.

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3. Abiding in His word involves . . .

a. *Listening*

- 1) In order to “live or dwell in” Christ’s word, we must first hear what He is saying to us.
- 2) In Mark 7:14, we read of a time when Jesus called a crowd to Himself and said to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand.”
- 3) When Peter, James and John were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and Peter offered to build three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah, God spoke from a cloud

and said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" (Mark 9:7).

b. *Learning*

- 1) As we noted at the beginning of this lesson, a disciple is a "learner."

"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice' . . ." (Matthew 9:13)

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me . . ." (Matthew 11:29).

- 2) All of our lives as Christians should be spent learning more and more about Jesus.

**More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me.**

- 3) To close our minds to the things of Christ is to cease being His disciples.

c. *Deeper Penetration Into The Truth*

- 1) None of us can hear or read the words of Jesus once and say that we have a full understanding of their meaning.
- 2) To abide in Christ's word means we keep studying and thinking about what He has said until more and more of its meaning becomes ours

d. *Obeying His Word*

- 1) Not only do we listen and learn, we must obey.
- 2) We study Christ's word not only for the intellectual benefit we gain, but in order to find out what God calls us to do.
- 3) As genuine disciples, we learn in order to do.
- 4) Jesus calls us to action.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the

kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

**Slide 8****C. RESULTS IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH**

“ . . . and you will know the truth” (v. 32a).

1. Camping out in our Lord’s word listening to Him, learning from Him and obeying Him will bring us to a knowledge of the truth.
2. At the beginning of this gospel, the apostle John tells us that Jesus, who is the Word made flesh, is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
3. In the upper room on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that He was not only “the way . . . and the life” but also “the truth” (John 14:6).
4. Jesus told Pilate, “I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37).
5. What is that truth?
6. It is that which shows us the real values of life?
7. There are some fundamental questions about life which each of us ask ourselves at one point or another:
  - a. What is my life truly about?
  - b. Why am I here?
  - c. What Is my purpose in life?
8. Jesus reveals to us the truth about what things are really important in life and what are not.

**Slide 9****D. BRINGS FREEDOM**

“ . . . and the truth will set you free” (v. 32b, ESV)

1. Freedom from *fear*
  - a. You will never have to walk alone.

- b. Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit as our comforter (*paraclete*), the one who walks beside us.
- c. Because of Him, all fear is gone.
- d. Many of us are familiar with these words from the hymn "*Because He Lives*"

**Because He lives, I can face tomorrow**  
**Because He lives, all fear is gone**  
**Because I know He holds the future**  
**And life is worth the living because He lives**

- 2. Freedom from *self*
  - a. Many of us realize that our greatest handicap is our own self
  - b. We struggle to change ourselves, but find it a never ending battle.
  - c. The first step of the twelve steps in Alcoholics Anonymous is for a person to admit that he or she is powerless over alcohol, and that their life has become unmanageable.
  - d. The prophet Jeremiah said, "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).
  - e. It is only in Christ that we become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).  

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- 3. Freedom from *other people*
  - a. There are many people whose lives are dominated by the fear of what other people may think and say.
  - b. The writer H.G. Wells once said "The trouble with so many people is that the voice of their neighbor sounds louder in their ears than the voice of God."
  - c. Genuine disciples are those who have ceased to care what people say because they think only of what God says.
- 4. Freedom from *sin*

- a. Just a few verses later Jesus said, “everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin” (John 8:34).
- b. Then He added, in verse 36, “if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”
- c. In 2 Timothy 2:26, Paul indicated that Satan is the one who holds us captive to do his will.
- d. The truth, as we noticed last week is that “there is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12) — Only Christ can set us free.

## **Conclusion**

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1. Let’s go back to what Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, that the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32, ESV).
2. Are you truly a disciple of Jesus?
  - a. Are you listening to Him and learning from Him?
  - b. Are you constantly diving deeper into the truth of His Word and obeying the things He tells you to do?
  - c. Have you been set free from your bondage to fear, your own self, the opinions of others and sin?
3. If your answer is yes, then may He continue to enrich your life and increase your righteousness.
4. However, if your answer is no, then why not make the decision now to come to Jesus in obedient faith?
5. Let Him wash away your sin through His blood in the water of baptism?
6. Begin a new life as a genuine disciple of Jesus and never look back.