

SO FEW REAL DISCIPLES

By: Dr. Hal Webb, Evangelist

"Then said he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few," Matt. 9:37.

The ministry of Jesus attracted many hundreds who gathered to hear His words, see a miracle, question His teachings and perhaps consider becoming one of His followers. The word itself means to be a close follower, a believer in someone, a person who is willing to believe in and serve another. During the life of Christ He attracted several special men and called them his disciples. They were special men who left all and gave their lives and love to the Master.

Today's Christian leaders speak of discipleship in the terms of going out to win others to Christ. I believe it is a lot more than that. All people must come to Christ in the same way by faith in His finished work. Jesus said *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but by me"* John 14:6. There is no other way to assure the salvation of our souls and a guaranteed entrance into heaven. It certainly does not stop there anymore than the birth of a child ends all that is important in its life. There are goals to be established, challenges to be met and a pursuit of the things that matter. The ranks of Christianity have been cheapened, weakened and confused by the shallow easy behavioristic brand of religion, that is now popular. Worldly believers desire popularity instead of sacrifice, self gratification instead of deprivation and the praise of man instead of the "well done" of God. Biblical discipleship requires much sacrifice, self crucifixion and marching to a different drum than most believers. It could result in the loss of earthly possessions, the misunderstanding of many believers and result

in a path of work instead of ease. Oh, but it is well worth it.

To understand why many believers refuse to make the sacrifice, let us consider from the words of Jesus the requirements to be met. **THERE MUST BE A HATING.** *"If anyone come to me, and hate not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"* Luke 14:26. The word "hate" in this verse can

be translated clearly as "love less". The Bible is full of verses that speak of loving our loved ones. There is no contradiction here. The level and totality of the love is the key to meeting this first qualification if one wants to be a disciple. Millions of believers put family and friends and what they think ahead of Jesus Christ. Many a man will miss God's best because he loves a woman above all. Girls will be sidetracked by the love for a young man, placing him before the will of God for their life. Our emphasis tends to focus on people instead of our Saviour. To be truly acceptable as a disciple you must not live for others or self but totally for Christ. He must be Lord of all or He is not Lord at all. Can you really say, I love Jesus, and His will and way for me above all others including self. Granted, this is a tough step to take, but it is the first. There are so many paths to consider and the endless cry, "Come with me" sounds from every quarter. Remember, no one however loving and special must be allowed to keep you from the loving arms of Jesus.

Further difficulty in becoming a true disciple comes from the fact **THERE MUST BE A CROSS BEARING.** *"Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple"* Luke 14:27. Discipleship has always required suffering and often death. Years ago 960 Jews fled the oppression of the Romans and climbed to the top of Masada. The

way up was a secret and the Romans decided to wait them out until they came down to surrender. Finally, thousands of Jewish captives were forced to carry buckets of dirt and build a ramp to the top. It took months, but finally the trapped Jews gathered knowing the next day all would be over. They prayed and sang and decided on a course of difficulty that ended life itself. Ten warriors were chosen and all the families lay down during the night and gave their lives. The ten drew straws and the one chosen dispatched the nine and fell on his own sword. When the Romans rushed up the slope to rape and kill, they discovered the Jews had chosen to die for their faith. To this day every conscript of Jewish fighting forces is required to carry full field pack to the top of this famous spot. There they must swear to die if necessary for Israel. No wonder the Jews are so very strong. Can we afford to be less when our leader is Jesus, the King of Kings? I am not suggesting we seal our faith with our death in some "cultish" mass suicide of believers. We need to decide, however, what would be our response to penalty, prison, or pressure to renounce our faith? Most present day Christians can't even stand the laughter of the crowd much less the thought of opposing them. I am afraid we have become a shallow, spineless bunch who would try for any agreement with evil to spare our worthless hide. Shame on us! We criticize the disciples who fled when Jesus was crucified, but how easy we turn and run. A true disciple must honestly ask, "Would I really be willing to suffer and give my life for Christ if it comes to that"? I do not believe we Christians will suffer through the actual seven year tribulation. I do believe if Jesus tarries much longer, we will see persecution. The third requirement is **A WILLINGNESS TO FORSAKE ALL.** *"whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"* Luke 14:33. Translated carefully, this indicates a willingness to do so. Man has always clung to the things he can

touch, hold and treasure. The rich young ruler chose to return to his riches and forget the question. *"What must I do to be saved?"*. We are not required to give up all we have and move into a tent in a pasture. We are, however, commanded to be willing to give up all in obedience to the Saviour. The black pastor said, "Brethren, we ought to sit loosely in this world". The words of a precious old song ring in my heart. "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through; my treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue." The disciple must be willing to sacrifice to follow the Master. I know several who were kept from serving Christ because they loved their car. Others who loved parents, or lovers who would not leave others behind, to serve Jesus. I say again, one cannot be a disciple that is not willing to leave all and sacrifice to be your best for the Lord.

There must also be a **DENIAL OF SELF.** *"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself"* Mark 8:34. Let me pause in this verse and drive the thought home. Anything on earth that is worth having comes through self denial. This includes the business man who must invest thousands of hours climbing up the corporate ladder. It is true of the professional athlete who strives years to get on a team or to win a gold medal in the Olympics. Life is not a picnic, it's a battleground. Our country is plagued by those who expect a government handout to keep them going. You will have to leave the crowd to walk with Jesus. Its a long uphill climb to live for Jesus. Many will not understand your sacrifice to walk with Him. It will cost you time, effort, personal wants and many other things to stay in the race. Many around you will fall out of the race for they will not be willing to pay the price. Paul spoke to one who started, saying, *"Ye did run well, who did hinder you?"* Gal. 5:7. A true disciple must leave all to walk beside Jesus. Our self must be crucified and whatever price accepted

to accomplish God's will for us. Are you willing to pay such a price?

Then we must **FOLLOW JESUS**. *"And follow me"* Mark 8:34. This must become a joyful daily ritual. With Christ as our pattern we must set out to walk with Him. *"The disciple is not above his master: but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master"* Luke 6:40. Say it to your heart. A true disciple will strive to be like his master. This takes a daily regimen of Bible study and prayer along with eager church participation. The lusts and loves of the world must be left behind and everything that will add spiritual maturity must be sought out. Your master will not stand still. He will move from need to need and you will have to hurry to follow. You will be tempted to consider the price too great, the task too hard and the goal far beyond you. Day by day the choice is yours. You can *"grow up unto him in all things"* Eph. 4:15. Or you will perhaps tire in the task, give up and turn back. To truly follow Jesus is to make Him our pattern from day to day. The choice then is pretty much up to you. You can drift with the majority of Christians, in a casual relationship, while sharing much of the transient things of this world. After all that is what most of your Christian friends will be doing. Or you can go the extra mile. Why not carefully adopt the requirements of discipleship just covered. Young people who speak about a high from drugs need to try the "high" which comes from walking with Jesus. There is no greater thrill on earth and it is great preparation for heaven. You will find Him to be a *"friend that sticketh closer than a brother"* Prov. 18:24.

Discipleship is not a quick overnight decision but a process of continuing development. After a time, carefully look in your life for these **EVIDENCES OF DISCIPLESHIP**. The first will be a **CONTINUING INTEREST IN YOUR BIBLE**. *"If ye continue in my word,*

then are ye my disciples, indeed" John 8:31. Your hunger for the Word of God will show your true relationship. *"Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* I Peter 2:2. Your spiritual growth will be a thermometer of your dedication to Him. Daily conformity to the Word will bring about mature service for God. A second evidence will be **YOUR LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN**. *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* John 13:35. Jesus never failed to show His love to others. We, His disciples, should be known for a visible affection and a deep spiritual love for those around us. Finally, our lives as true disciples must bring forth **SPIRITUAL FRUIT**. *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.* John 15:16. Please notice carefully the job we were chosen to do. A mark of real discipleship will be the fruit our lives produce. The last words of the Master to His disciples were that they should bear fruit. This wonderful labor is the responsibility of every believer and our lives should show evidence that we love Him and serve Him. Don't wait for the pastor, the missionary or the evangelist. to do the job true disciples are called to do. Prove your faith, give evidence to your dedication to be a child of God. He called twelve when He was here who were willing to follow the Biblical requirements for discipleship. Now the opportunity is ours. **Lets do it!**