

TO BE A BELIEVER IS TO BE A DISCIPLE

There are those that teach one becomes a believer and then later they may or may not decide to become a disciple.

True believers understand that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Jn. 20:31; Rom. 5:1; Rom. 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-10). Saving faith personally embraces the Lord Jesus Christ for WHO He is as Lord-God and for WHAT He has done as Savior (Jn. 1:12, 3:16; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9-10; 1Cor. 15:1-4). It's a matter of FAITH and FAITH alone!

However, in saving faith one enters into a discipleship relationship with the Lord. The word "disciple" (*mathetes*) simply means follower or learner. A disciple is a learning follower. In the NT there are true disciples and there are false disciples (cf. Jn. 6). Paul said that one of the perils that he dealt with was "**perils among false brethren**" (2 Cor. 11:26). Many will say "**Lord, Lord**" to Jesus on judgment day only to have Him expose them as false disciples (cf. Mt. 7:21-23).

However, all true believers in the NT are shown to be disciples (cf. Jn. 9:27-28; 18:19; Acts 20:30). They have a kind of faith that genuinely follows Christ – not perfectly, but definitely.

In Matthew 28:19 Christ said to go into all the world and make disciples and then baptize them. In the NT the consistent pattern was to immediately baptize believers. They were immediately considered disciples/followers and one of the ways they demonstrated that was in the act of being baptized immediately!

We are not saved by following, but if we are saved the fruit will be seen in the following, starting with being baptized. We are saved by faith alone, but it must be the right kind of faith. A true saving faith is a faith that follows. It's not about the PERFECTION of our life, but it is certainly about the DIRECTION of our life. A "faith" that doesn't follow (certainly to some degree) is not a saving faith!

John 10:27–28 (NKJV)

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

So, we must be clear that we are not saved by discipleship (following), but if we are saved, we are disciples (followers). We are saved by faith alone, but the right kind of faith follows.

TWO VIEWS ON WHEN ONE BECOMES A DISCIPLE:

1) Salvation involves becoming a believer, not necessarily a disciple. One may be a believer without ever becoming a disciple. Becoming a believer is seen to be "FREE" while becoming a disciple is seen to be "COSTLY" which is thought to contradict GRACE. Discipleship is seen to be subsequent and optional to salvation.

2) *****My View***** To become a believer is to become a disciple. The two are interchangeable. Every believer has come to learn something of Christ (related to Who He is and What He has done for them), personally embraced this truth, and is now in process (cf. Eph. 4:20-24).

In salvation every believer has been taught by God in that it is God through His Word Who has brought them to conviction and conversion. It is God Who does the enlightening work in the heart.

John 6:45 (NKJV)

45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

The quote here in John 6:45 is from Isaiah 54:13. Everyone who comes to Christ has been taught by God in that it is God Who has shown the truth of Christ to them. No one arrives at this apart from the Divine Teacher.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NKJV)

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It is God Himself Who ultimately TEACHES people showing them the truth of WHO Jesus is. 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, "***no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.***"

Ephesians 4:20–21 (NKJV)

20 But you have not so learned Christ,
21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

Salvation is a very PERSONAL thing in which God personally teaches a person showing them the TRUTH of Jesus. This is a God-thing. Thus, all

believers know something of Christ. They have seen the CORE truth of Christ as Savior and Lord.

Learned in Eph. 4:20 is the idea of learning in such a way as to become a disciple. The issue as put forth by Paul is not simply learning about Christ, but actually that they had learned Christ.

As believers, we have become LEARNERS or FOLLOWERS of Christ. The beginning point of this *learning Christ* is conversion (cf. Mt. 28:19), but then deepens as we mature (cf. Mt. 28:20; Phil. 3:10).

As we continue on as believers, God the Spirit continues to be the ULTIMATE TEACHER in the hearts of His children.

1 John 2:27 (NKJV)

27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same **anointing teaches you concerning all things**, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

As believers we now have received the anointing; that is, we have received the Holy Spirit and His special enlightening and discerning work that comes with Him. The Spirit is called "***the Spirit of Truth***" (Jn. 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). The anointing is the Spirit of Truth Who has come to live inside of us as believers. Ultimately, the Spirit is the teacher, and He uses the Word. Those that are teaching the Word fit into this paradigm simply because they are teaching the Word.

Salvation is seen to be free (by God's Grace) not dependent upon human works or effort in any way. However, saving faith involves personal appropriation of WHO Christ is as Lord and Savior which involves the WILL, which relates to the "COST" factor as taught by Christ. IT WILL COST YOU YOUR WILL! It will cost you your SELF-WILLED PRIDE which resists and rejects the truth of Christ as Lord and Savior (compare the words - Broken, Humbled, Repentance). To personally acknowledge as truth (BELIEVE ON) the LORDSHIP/SAVIORHOOD OF CHRIST for oneself is costly in that sense. This is a matter of the heart/will. IT IS A MATTER OF SAVING FAITH!

Acts 11:26 (NKJV)

26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Note that disciples and Christians are used interchangeably here. To be a Christian is to be a disciple!

Jesus said to go and “make disciples” and then to baptize them (Matt. 28:19). As this works its way out in the book of Acts, we see that immediately when people believed they were baptized. This is the RULE! Thus, they were immediately considered “disciples”. They did not wait until later, they did not wait until a more serious “discipleship commitment” was made. No! In keeping with Christ’s commission upon believing, they were immediately considered disciples and, therefore, immediately baptized.

Christ did not say, “Go and make believers,” and then baptize them, although the New Testament clearly teaches “Believers Baptism”. Rather, in saying, “Go therefore and make disciples,” Jesus really spoke to the nature of a true saving faith – showing that it follows. We are saved by believing, but a true saving faith follows. And initially that following is demonstrated in water baptism. We are not saved by water baptism, but the expectation is that if you are a true believer who follows, you will be baptized. That is the consistent pattern in the book of Acts.

A true faith follows – not perfectly – but certainly. We are not saved by following, but we are saved by a faith that then follows. The root is faith – following is the fruit. We are not saved by fruit but by faith alone. However, if faith is real, it will be seen in the fruit!

As the Reformers were known to say: “We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves does not remain alone.” IT FOLLOWS!

To be a true believer results in being a true disciple.