

FAITH FOLLOWS

A disciple is a follower of Christ. A true saving faith follows Christ. To be a true believer is to be a true follower. It doesn't follow perfectly but it does certainly. To be a true believer results in being a true disciple.

John 8:30–31 (NKJV)

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

There is an interesting play on words between verse 30 and 31. In verse 30 it says many claimed to "**believe in Him**" but then in verse 31 it clarifies that they simply "**believed Him**" perhaps indicating that they merely had an intellectual assent deficient of truly believing **IN** Him.

To them, Jesus makes this major qualification: He tells these professing believers, "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.**" Right here Jesus makes one of the most important qualifiers about true saving faith that we find in the New Testament.

In John 8:31, when Jesus says if they abide in His word, they are His "disciples indeed," He is saying those who continue in His word are TRULY His disciples. Their continuance proves them to be the genuine article.

As the story in John 8 continues it clearly shows these did NOT continue on in Christ's Word. In fact, they immediately sought to refute it.

Believed [is] likely only a profession because of what they said in verse 33. – **Charles Ryrie**

Believed here seems to mean "made a formal profession of faith." Their words show that these people were not true believers (see vv. 33-34). – **NIV Study Bible**

This section of discourse is addressed to those who believe, and yet do not believe. Clearly, they were inclined to think that what Jesus said was true. But they were not prepared to yield him the far-reaching allegiance that real trust in him implies. – **Leon Morris**

They are like the professors in the book of Hebrews (see Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-29) who may have stopped short of true saving faith. It is important to know that mere profession is not necessarily saving faith. There is a sort of faith

that stops short of true saving faith. James referenced this when he spoke of faith without works (cf. Ja. 2).

In the parable of the Sower and the Soils, Jesus talks about those “who believe for a while” but then, in time of testing, fall away (cf. Lk. 8:13). They immediately receive the word with joy, but they have no root. It doesn’t really take root in their heart, and consequently, when their faith is tested, it immediately falls away (cf. Mt. 13:21). The genuine converts represented by the good soil are those who receive the word with a good heart and bear fruit with perseverance (cf. Lk. 8:15).

The genuine continue! That is Christ’s point in John 8:31. Those that abide (that is continue) in His word are His disciples indeed! We are not saved by discipleship. We are saved by faith alone. However, if we have a saving faith it follows – not perfectly, but certainly. It continues on in Christ’s Word.

John 10:26–27 (NKJV)

26 But you **do not believe**, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

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

The true sheep follow Christ. These are the true believers. A kind of faith that doesn’t follow is bogus! This, by the way, is the essence of “Easy Believism”. Easy Believism says you can believe in a saving way without following. That is contrary to Christ. Again, we are not saved by following, but if we truly have a saving faith we will follow. Following is the result not the means of salvation.

Faith that saves produces discipleship. Passing impulses do not make disciples. – ***W.E. Vine***

2 John 9 (NKJV)

9 Whoever transgresses and does **not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God**. He who **abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son**.

Abiding in Christ’s word is the mark of those who are His disciples INDEED – in truth! To walk away from Christ’s word is to walk away from Him. The genuine continue on in the doctrine of Christ.

Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone. It will produce something. After a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he will want to “continue in His Word.” ... As the pastor of a church, I learned to watch out for the person who is active in the church but is not

interested in the study of the Word of God. Such a one is dangerous to a church. – **J. Vernon McGee**

John 13:34–35 (NKJV)

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love is the defining trait of true disciples of Christ. And the apostle John in 1 John 3:14 shows that love of the brethren is proof that we have passed from death to life. In 1 John 4:7-8 he says, “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” True believers are true disciples which demonstrates itself in brotherly love.

All Christians are disciples (“disciples” is used as a synonym for “believers” in Acts 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 19, 38; 11:26; 13:52; 14:20-22, 28; 15:10; 18:23, 27; 19:9; 20:1; 21:4; 16); however, not all disciples are Christians (John 6:66; 1 Jn. 2:19; cf. Mt. 13:20-21; John 15:2; 2 John 9). – **John MacArthur**

In the early days of the church it says “***the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly***” (Acts 6:1, 7). Paul upon his conversion tried “***to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple***” (Acts 9:26). In Acts 9:36 it speaks of “***a certain disciple named Tabitha***” who died and it goes on to say “***the disciples heard that Peter was there***” (Acts 9:38). Clearly the word disciple is here used in the sense of being a true believer.

In Acts 11:26 it says, “***And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.***” Up to this point, they were simply called “***disciples***,” but now they were called “***Christians.***” In Acts 11:29, it says, “***Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief...***”. Again, the believers are referred to as “***disciples***”. In Acts 14:20 after Paul was stoned and left for dead, “***the disciples gathered around him***”. In Acts 14:22, Paul went about “***strengthening the souls of the disciples***”.

Upon coming to Antioch, in Acts 14:28, it says, “***So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.***” Disciples were those in the faith and as so used in Acts the word disciple is interchangeable with believer.

At the Jerusalem Council, Peter challenged the Jewish believers, saying, “Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples” (Acts

15:10). In Acts 18:23, it says that Paul was “**strengthening all the disciples**”. In Acts 18:27 the brethren wrote “**exhorting the disciples**” to receive Apollos.

In Acts 19:30, when Paul wanted to go in to the people it says, “**the disciples would not allow him.**” After the uproar at Ephesus had quieted down Acts 20:1 says, “**Paul called the disciples to himself**”. In Acts 21:4, after landing at Tyre, it says, “**And finding disciples, we stayed seven days.**” In Acts 21:16, in reference to going to Jerusalem, it says, “**Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us**”.

The use of the word disciple/disciples in the book of Acts is significant because Acts is, in effect, a history book about the early Church. Clearly, in the book of Acts, to be a believer was considered to be a disciple, which is consistent with the Great Commission given by Christ in Matthew 28:18-20.

Note: The plain, straightforward sense and meaning of the word disciple, as used by Christ and the early church, indicates that, in fact, it was interchangeable with the concept of being a believer. To claim that a person can be a believer without being a disciple is foreign to what Christ taught and foreign to the language of the early church as seen in the book of Acts.

If one doesn't have a faith that follows – it's BOGUS!