

How to Christian: Make Disciples
The 6 Marks of the Disciple
Matthew 28:18
Week of April 11

In this 7-week series, 'How to Christian,' we will be looking at the six marks of the disciple that Jesus spoke clearly about. Jesus said that his followers or 'disciples,' would be marked by the following behaviors: They would follow Jesus; they would deny themselves; they would hold to Jesus' teachings; they would love others, they would bear fruit in keeping with who they were in Christ, and they would make disciples themselves. All these behaviors would speak to their new identity in Christ.

As we think of these marks, its important to remember that these characteristics were not behaviors to be forced. We'll find in the text that these came from relationship with Jesus. I can't make myself 'bear much fruit' for Christ. It's like telling an apple tree to produce an apple on command. The apple comes from *who the apple tree inherently IS*. Who I am is constantly changing as I grow closer and closer to Jesus.

As we are changed by our practices—prayer, walking in faith, listening to the Word, meditating, just to name a few—the Spirit changes who we are on the inside. THEN....we will begin to see that we are loving others, bearing fruit, and denying ourselves. We are not alone in this work—the Spirit is within us, doing it for us as we walk in obedience.

We have this source of power, within us, as believers. The Spirit lives inside us. And we can always ask for the change we want to see in ourselves. He is so faithful to answer that call for change. 'Lord, I believe, help me in my unbelief!' I can't count the number of times I have asked God to change my heart when it wasn't going the right direction. You can too. The only person that wants your heart change more than you-is the Spirit himself!

*As you enter prayer now, take a moment to settle your mind. Put aside your concerns and what needs to get done today, or what didn't get done today. Take a slow, deep breath. Center yourself in His Peace. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and End. You are found in Him.
Be Still.*

Pause and Pray.

Jesus, I am here because I want to experience You. As I meditate on this passage, draw to mind those things that You would have me become more aware of. Center my heart and mind on Yourself. Use your Word to draw my heart to You. Amen.

Our reading today is from Matthew 28:16-20.

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

REFLECT.

- Jesus' final words to his disciples.
- Go.
- Make Disciples.
- Baptize them.
- Teach them to obey everything I've commanded you.
- I'll be with you.

One phrase from Brian's sermon a few weeks ago struck me so hard that I have thought about getting it as a tattoo. And I've never thought about getting a tattoo! Nothing wrong with them—just not interested in the permanence and the pain. But this phrase, I thought, I wouldn't mind having that on my forearm. The phrase was REMAIN IN ME. So many times in the day-to-day choices, moment to moment, I have a choice to pick life or death. Will I choose to say or do something life-giving? Or will I choose to do something that will drag someone down? All of those decisions depend on whether or not I'm remaining in Him.

So as I look at our Scripture today, and Jesus' instruction to me and all those who follow Him, it makes it much easier and less overwhelming to start at the end. First, remember, that He will be with me.

Then I have the strength to Go.

Then I have the strength To Baptize,

Then I have the strength to obey myself and To Teach.

Only in His strength and power do I have what it takes. So I must remain in Him. I must allow Him to be my resource in each moment of each day.

PAUSE, PRAY AND ASK.

Lord, there are so many ways that we can share our faith. Today we ask you to give us the strength and the constant reminder to do these things:

Lord, Make us faithful to be aware of those around us. To be always on the lookout for ways we can pray for them, serve them, share life with them.

Lord, Make us faithful to pray for those around us who do not know you.

Lord, make us faithful to pray for opportunities to share love and life with them.

Lord, when those opportunities come, make us faithful to speak up. We know you are faithful to give us the chance and the words. Make us obedient to say them and step out in faith.

Lord, make us faithful to love everyone that you put in our path. Help us build trust, and loving relationship. Help us listen. Help us share honestly and authentically, apologizing when we mess up. And when it is time to share the story of what you have done for us, make us faithful to share it. Amen.

YIELD.

Take a few moments to think about someone that you recently met. Ask God to till the soil, to make opportunities for you to share life with this person. Ask Him if there is a particular way you could reach out to love this person this week, and deepen your relationship. PAUSE.

Take a few moments to think about someone that you are in a relationship with now. This isn't a new friend. Maybe it is someone that you have known for years, an old friend or your child. You'd like to be more intentional about your prayers and conversations with them. Take a moment to share this desire with God. Ask Him to give you opportunities and words, guidance as to how to pray for this person you love. Is He encouraging you to take another step in conversation or action? Ask Him. PAUSE.

We return to Matthew 28:16-20.

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

Jesus, I ask that you would give me the same boldness that you gave to the disciples as they went out, sharing the news of your resurrection.

Give me the words to share, and the opportunity, like you gave Paul and Peter. Despite their failures, they believed the forgiveness You gave them, and they went boldly out proclaiming who You were, and what You had done.

Give me the love for people that You always had Jesus, meeting them where they were, extending grace to them. As you knelt down to the children, to the woman with the issue of bleeding, to the little dead girl, may I extend that same kind of grace and love to all I meet.

Give me the faithfulness to pray that You gave to Anna, who worshiped and prayed and waited for the arrival of the Messiah her whole life, for 80 years.

Lord may I be bold, faithful to pray, loving. And then, give me the opportunity and the words. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. In Jesus mighty name, Amen.