

Definition of a Disciple: A disciple is a person who follows Jesus—to **know** Jesus and his teaching; to **grow** more like Jesus; and to **go** for Jesus, serving others and making new disciples.

I. Five Traits of a Disciple

A disciple's life is marked by five traits:

1. **Trust:** Disciples believe the gospel and—by faith—follow the Son of God. The healthy fear of God is the kind of fear that will remove your fear. (God's wrath)
2. **Love:** Disciples live in healthy community with the people of God. The greatest commandment, Jesus said, is to love God wholeheartedly and to love others sacrificially (Mark 12:28–34). It is only a lifestyle of love that shows the world we are Christ's followers (John 13:34–35). In fact, without love, our spiritual efforts are as worthless as a clanging cymbal (1 Cor. 13:4-8).
3. **Learning:** Disciples are shaped and guided by the Word of God. (Ps 119:105)
"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).
4. **Life Change:** Disciples are yielded to and transformed by the Spirit of God. Jesus' original call in Mark 1:17 was to "Follow me . . ." [in order to] "become" [something they weren't].
5. **Service:** Disciples are devoted to and engaged in the mission of God. (Mt 28)

II. Command #1: REPENTANCE

Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" (Matt 4:17)

"Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:5)

"Repent" was the first word of Jesus' first sermon. Repentance is admitting our own faults, recognition of God's holiness, and then making the necessary changes in our behavior to line up with His. We cannot expect to come to God on our own terms; we are only permitted into his presence on His terms, and His holiness rightfully requires repentance.

III. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them."

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father.

Authentic repentance involves three things:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'"

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ 28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in.

So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

IV. Questions for Bible Study:

- 1) Why do you think the Father gave the property to the son? Would you?
- 2) “He spent everything.” Sin can be illogical. Then why do we do it?
- 3) What does it mean to “sin against heaven”?
- 4) In what three ways did the son show true repentance?
- 5) Would you have reacted the same way as the Father in this case initially? What do you think was going through the Father’s mind at this time?
- 6) Do you think the Father was too easy on the son? Why or why not?
- 7) Are you quick to run to the Father after sinning? What keeps you from Him?
- 8) What did the father “say” to his son by his generosity? How does this apply to us about how God feels about us after we repent?
- 9) Why was the older son so angry? What do you think his relationship with God was like? How could he be so hard hearted?
- 10) What can we learn from this story about God? About ourselves? What adjustments do you need to make in your life as a result of this?
- 11) Have you truly repented of your sins? Have you confessed them, repented of them, and turned from them?
- 12) Have you allowed Christ to have authority in your life? Have you examined your life from His perspective? If not, take some time right now and let His Holy Spirit work in your heart and life (Psalm 32:5; 51; I John 1:9)
- 13) What is right is what is best. If we don’t think and then act this way, then we will always end up: 1) hurting ourselves 2) hurting others and 3) most important of all... hurting God—not giving him all the glory He deserves. Our sins put him on the cross to suffer. Why? Because what is right is what is best. Only one who is fully God and fully human can be the perfect sacrifice to provide an eternal forgiveness for an eternal soul. Now the wrath of God is kept from coming upon our guilty condition. All justice has been met because the offense has been fully paid for—his life for ours. Somebody had to pay with their *body*. Why? Because what is right is what is best. “No greater love than a man who lays down his life for his friends” (John 15:13) What do you think about this? Does this make sense to you? Why or why not?