

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE

In response to Christ's teachings, multitudes were saved, but of them, only a few were willing to follow Him and be a disciple. The main reason is that being a disciple costs something. Christ said in Luke 14:27, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

There is a big difference between believing in Jesus Christ and serving Him. When a person believes in Christ, he becomes a child of God, and when he serves the Lord, he becomes a disciple. Salvation is the result of Christ's work on the cross. The Bible says, in Ephesians 2:8,9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Nothing in the life of the believer adds to or takes away from his perfect security; salvation cannot be lost. But since discipleship comes only through a life of dedicated service to the Lord, it can be lost because it is based upon the believer's faithfulness. Salvation secures a place in heaven, while discipleship secures rewards in heaven. To go to heaven doesn't involve turning from sin or following Christ; those things are required for discipleship. Thus not all believers are disciples.

To put it simply being a disciple means laying aside your will for your life and doing God's will. Christ proclaimed in Luke 14:26, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be My disciple." Jesus wasn't speaking here about how you feel emotionally about your family, but rather about how you feel about their will if it conflicts with His. God has commanded His children to tell others how they too can know how to have eternal life and many times when a believer decides to serve the Lord, it is his family and friends that will try to hinder him. I've known believers who were told by their family that they shouldn't go around forcing their views on others. If you were a doctor, and you had a cure for a disease, I'm sure you would see the folly of that reasoning. Although you should not force the Gospel on anyone who doesn't want to hear it, you should present it to those who do, and at least give them the choice of whether to believe it or not.

I know several young people who were given an ultimatum by their parents of either giving up what they considered "religious fanaticism" or moving out of their homes. If this or something like it were to occur in your life, Christ said there is no in between ground; you either follow His will, or choose not to be a disciple.

There is no such thing as a "silent" witness in God's service. Anyone who chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ is choosing to be a spokesman for God (II Corinthians 5:20).