

God's Calling Requirements Part 11

To be a Disciple, and not a Mere Christian

Christian is the idiom we use most frequently for the followers of Christ, but that term 'Christian' occurs in Scripture only three times and as the following:-

I. "26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26 KJV) The disciples after a period of one year of teaching, and after their lives being changed and transformed and were different from other people around them, they were called by the society Christians. The term Christian or Christians was not used by the disciples to call their fellow disciples but was used by the non believers to call the followers of Christ. At this time the term Christian or Christians used by the church to call those who believe or are link with Christ with one way or another; like they are going to church, or those who pray before eating, or in link to faith and religion. But the truth is this if those people are not disciples of Christ they should not be called Christians. New Testament believers never called themselves Christians. The term used most commonly for the followers of Christ was disciple or disciples – it occurs 264 times. Disciple means student, follower, learner, or imitator. Now a day Christ's church are not full of disciples but mere crowd without discipline or people without transformed life. Therefore you need to be careful and not to use the word Christian, and not to trust as disciples of Jesus those who are calling themselves Christians unless you prove their commitment to Christ and to His Word and His will.

II. "28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28 KJV) The term Christian was not a sweet name or kind word, but of derision. Christian was the name that no one wanted to be identified by; the name that led to persecution and cultural rejection. Paul when he stood in front of Agrippa was in imprisonment and in suffering testifying the message of God to them, "29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts 26:29 KJV) Now a day those who call themselves Christians they want to eat the best food, to get the best job with the best payment, they are the one who uses more of restaurants, hotels and for a leisure time. They are so worldly and even more than those who do not believe in Christ. They are not willing to suffer and live in discipline in pertain to good stewardship for money, food, time, dress, work, labor, and where and how to live. Therefore the term disciple of Jesus better to be used because that means you need to prove them before you can call them disciples of Jesus and consider them as brothers.

III. "16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:16 KJV) The style of suffering and persecution is a usual thing that the disciple of Jesus is experiencing from the society of people around him. Apostle Peter preceded with this statement "15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." (1 Peter 4:15 KJV) Therefore, being a disciple of Jesus you should not be doing the things the non believers are doing. Now a day those who are called Christians are doing evil more than the non believers. They tell lies, they cheat, steal, fight, greedy, indulge in businesses, they love money, borrowing money and not return, got involved in love affairs, getting debaucheries, etc. Therefore you need to be careful and test every Christian and prove him before you treat him as a disciple.

In the New Testament there are no specific criteria for the term Christian, but there is for the term disciple. The term disciple – it occurs 264 times. According to **Matthew 16:24, 25, "24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."** The disciples do four things as Jesus declared and as the following:

A. Deny themselves: Christians now a day they are not willing to give up any pleasure. Many Christians now they measure God's approval on their lives by how much trips, journeys, safaris, and other material things they are enjoying and got involve in. Be willing to deny yourself the pleasure of this world when that is needed.

B. Take up their cross; Christians now a day they don't carry their cross, but they hang the cross on their necks. They don't want to be responsible and accountable. They love to get privileges and are not willing to pay back to Christ and have duties toward Him. Be willing to be responsible, and accountable in taking your cross and doing your duties well.

C. Follow Christ: Christians now a day they follow their own plans and ambitions and not the plan of God to them in their lives. They want Christ to follow them, and not they to follow Christ. Few are those who are following the plan of God in their lives; those are the true disciples, therefore be one of them.

D. Lose their life: Christians now a day they don't like to take the risk and offer their lives fully to God. Even their prayers are detestable and kind of wants, shopping, purchasing and gaining material things. Be willing to lose your life and your privileges for the sake of Christ whenever that is needed.

The Scriptures teaches us more specific criteria about the disciples of Jesus:

1. The disciples of Jesus forsake the conventional life of their culture and tradition, at least in certain moments: "21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." (Matthew 8:21-22 KJV) "59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-60 KJV) "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." (Luke 14:26 KJV) We need to love Jesus and His commands more than our culture and tradition and even more than our love ones; father, mother, brother, sister, etc.; we might be lock odd, but that what Jesus wants from us as His disciples.

2. The disciples of Jesus experience risk in following Christ, and they do not always choose the safe and convenient life: "25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish." (Matthew 8:25 KJV) Following Jesus entail risk, and in certain occasion even with all what we plan the Lord would allow certain situation that we really cannot do anything but to trust Him, "22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on." (Luke 12:22 KJV) Jesus wants us to behave and act as disciples; that we need to trust him fully in our daily life and needs, and be willing to give up the convenient life when that is needed. Following Jesus in certain occasions entail uncertainties and require from us to give up certain benefits and privileges, "57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes

have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. (Luke 9:57-58 KJV) “33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33 KJV)

3. *The disciples of Jesus find themselves in mixed and questionable company as advocates and representatives of Christ:* “10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” (Matthew 9:10-11 KJV) “14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. 15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.” (Mark. 2:14-15 KJV) The Disciples of Jesus they found themselves among sinners to evangelize to them and to bring them to Christ, and they might be even criticized because of that; so we need to reach to such kind of people in order to evangelize to them even if we are criticized. But what is going on now a day the Christians are becoming worldly and they are doing all the worldly things the non believers are doing; watching TV, birthday parties, celebrating non Biblical worldly events like father or mother day, dating, boy friend and girl friend, etc. Instead of they will evangelize they are the one who will be infected with the evil of the world. Therefore we need to be alert and strong, that the non believers will not influence us, but we will influence them and bring them to Christ.

4. *The disciples of Jesus are concerned about the harvest, the lost:* “37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.” (Matthew 9:37 KJV) The Disciples of Jesus are eager and have great compassion for the lost and do their best to go to them and bring them to Christ. Christians now a day are diligent to bring the lost to their church functions, parties and activities but not to Christ and His Word and discipline. Therefore we need to bring the non believers to Christ, to His Word, to His discipline, and to His will.

5. *The disciples of Jesus find themselves in ministry situations that demand supernatural spiritual power:* “1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” (Matthew 10:1 KJV) “1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.” (Luke 9:1 KJV) The disciples were called here to drive out demons. Satan is against the church, and the disciples who determine to follow Christ will find themselves in a war with the power of darkness. But Jesus promised His disciples, and we today, the victory, “18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18 KJV) Therefore we need to be encouraged and go forward to continue to serve the Lord and do His work, to drive out demons and to heal the sick by praying and laying hands on them.

6. *The disciples of Jesus have a teachable and humble servant spirit:* “24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.” (Matthew 10:24 KJV) “5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” (John 13:5 KJV) The disciples are humble, they don't have pride, and are willing to be servants, service providers, and offer services to others.

7. *The disciples of Jesus are under discipline – and willing to be sent:* “13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.” (Mark 14:13 KJV) The disciples of Jesus are ready and prepared to be sent and to finish certain particular task. Therefore, we need to be ready and prepared to be sent and to finish certain particular task.

8. *The disciples of Jesus have a relationship with Christ and fellow-disciples like in a family:* “49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!” (Matthew 12:49 KJV) Here Christ pointing that the disciples are His mother and brethren. The disciple of Jesus their relations with other disciples are even stronger than their relations with their own relatives. The church is considered the family of God and we need to be in stronger relationship with the brethren than of what we have with our non believer relatives or family members.

9. *The Disciples of Jesus are willing to be placed between Christ and hungry-hurting people with resources that are inadequate, and only faith in Christ, to sustain them:* “19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.” (Matthew 14:19 KJV) “For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.” (Luke 9:14 KJV) Here the disciples of Jesus were able with the help of the Lord to feed a big crowd composed of thousands of people with a less resources of five loaves and few fishes. Stewardship and planning is so needed and the disciples of Jesus are called to plan well, but there is certain occasions that God would allow you to pass through, which will force you to depend and rely only on Him to provide in spite of all your preparation.

10. *The disciples of Jesus prays with Jesus:* “33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.” (Mark 14:33-34 KJV) “45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” (Luke 22:45-46 KJV) The disciples of Jesus trust and committed themselves to God in the life of prayer. Therefore we need to commit ourselves to the life of prayers and trust Him that He will enable us to overcome all our difficulties and struggles through prayers.

11. *The disciples of Jesus are not called to the work of Christ, nearly as much as to Christ Himself:* “13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.” (Luke 6:13 KJV) Many they run after getting ministry but are not willing to draw near to Christ. The disciples of Jesus here drew near to Christ and as they drew near to Him they found themselves doing the work and the ministry of God being the apostles of Christ. Therefore let us draw near to Christ as He called us, and imitate Him so we be transformed and enabled to do the ministry that he had called us to do.

12. *The disciples of Jesus love one another:* “35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35 KJV) The disciples of Jesus love other disciples with the love of Christ, and not with emotional or worldly love. We need to love and cherish the other true disciples of the Lord.

13. The disciples of Jesus are under training to become more and more like Jesus: “40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.” (Luke 6:40 KJV) The disciples of Jesus’ training is not only by studying but applying God’s Word in life. In the same way we are under continuous training, and our perfection as disciples, that we need to be like Jesus, is the proof that we are perfect.

14. The disciples of Jesus bear fruit: “8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:8 KJV) The disciples of Jesus and we among them are fruit bearers, manifested in their lives, which are fruit of repentance, fruit of the Holy Spirit, and fruit of new people that they are reaching for Christ.

The disciples of Jesus consider Christ as their savior. The term “savior” occurs in the New Testament 27 times. While Jesus is clearly our “savior,” as He died for us, another more assertive term is ignored, “Lord,” that occurs more than 300 times. Christians now a day want Jesus as Savior, but does not want Him a Lord over their lives. The disciples of Jesus consider and treat the Lord as their Savior and their Lord. Lord means He is the One Who on control over their lives. Therefore as disciples of the Lord Jesus, we need to let Him to be the Lord who is on control over our lives.

The above study of Scriptures can help the church to be more discerning and able to discern who are among the members are disciples and who are not, and who need more teaching and training till their lives be transformed as disciples of Jesus. Many who are called Christians, even in born again churches, and even they are part of ministries, but they are not disciples. Sooner or later such people if they will not be discovered and treated properly will cause disturbances inside the body of Christ, His church.

When Joshua sent the spies to the city of Jericho, they met the prostitute Rahab as we read here, **“1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. 2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. 3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. 4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: 5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate. 8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; 9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: 13 And that ye will save alive my**

father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. 14 And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. 15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. 16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. 17 And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. 18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. 19 And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. 20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. 21 And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window. 22 And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.” (Joshua 2:1-22 KJV) The evidence of Rehab’s conversion, her repentance and her behavior as a disciple is very clear. She is the one who herself took the initiative to lodge them and take the risk to protect them and help them in their mission (that is in verses 2-8). She testified to them that her heart melt, got believe on the true God of Israel, and got converted after hearing the news about them (that is in verses 9-11). She asked them to show kindness to her father, mother, sister and brothers and their families. She did not ask them to show kindness to her male prostitutes or her boyfriends or other colleagues in her business because she knew the God of Heaven will not approve her the sin of adultery (that is in verses 12-13) so truly she repented and had faith in the Lord. She agreed to give up her profession, her business, her house and her city for God’s sake. She agreed to do all the instruction that she was asked to do (that is in verses 14-21). And the Israelites fulfilled what they promised her as she obeyed the instruction that she received from the spies: **“22 But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. 23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.” (Joshua 6:22-23 KJV)** As you read when they saved the lives of Rahab and her family, they still put them outside the camp of the Israelites for further checking and teaching before they can be put among the Israelites. The church should be discerning about true conversion and true life changes in the life of the disciples for Christ.

There is somewhat similar story to the story of Rahab in the book of Judges, **“23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before was Luz.) 24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy. 25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family. 26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.” (Judges 1:23-26 KJV)** The church here tried to apply the Scripture but in the wrong way by trying to create a figure like Rahab of Jericho. Here they offered to the man mercy if he will give them service (that is in verse 24). Now a day many churches they ask people to do a ministry so they can be part of the

church, to tie them to the church, without any evidence of conversion or change in life. The man and his family got the privileges from the Israelites but he was not saved and the evidence of that is in verse 26. The man went back to his previous life and background and built a new city and called it Luz as the previous city that he handed over to the Israelites. Many people who are called Christians when they join the church their lives are not changed and they still carry the same plans and ambitions of the past life and are still holding fast to the sinful tradition and practices of their past.

My Dear and Beloved: Go through the message and consider each and every point and see if you are a true disciple of Jesus. If not then you need to repent and apply the Scripture in your life as you agree to pray.

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life.*

Let us confess and renounce our sins. Lord forgive me the following sins
_____.

Lord thank you for your clear word to me. I commit myself to apply the principles that I learned from this message in my life and ministry as I commit myself to be a disciple of yours and to continue to serve you and do your whole will. Lord sustain me, mold me and provide for me to achieve all that. Lord I commit myself to reproduce more fruit of the Holy Spirit that people will see Jesus in my life.

Lord bless my brethren who committed their lives to you. Lord help them in their life and ministry and provide their needs to go on and serve you.

Lord, I pray for us as a church; we commit ourselves to walk in your Word and to go on and serve you and be willing to suffer for you in order to finish your work and to implement your will in our lives and in the life of the church and the ministry that you entrusted to us. Lord fills us once again with the Holy Spirit and enables us to evangelize and to reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and with the Word of God.

Lord, we pray that you will enable us to plant new Bible studies and new congregations for the church and to reach out new people and new places. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus' name, Amen.

God's Calling Requirements Part 11. To be a Disciple and not a Mere Christian. Acts 11:26. Acts 26:28,29. 1 Peter 4:16,15. Matthew 16:24,25. Matthew 8:21-22. Luke 9:59-60. Luke 14:26. Matthew 8:25. Luke 12:22. Luke 9:57-58. Luke 14:33. Matthew 9:10-11. Mark 2:14-15. Matthew 9:37. Matthew 10:1. Luke 9:1. Matthew 16:18. Matthew 10:24. John 13:5. Mark 14:13. Matthew 12:49. Matthew 14:19. Luke 9:14. Matthew 14:33-34. Luke 22:45-46. Luke 6:13. John 13:35. Luke 6:40. John 15:8. Joshua 2:1-22. Joshua 6:22-23. Judges 1:23-26.

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