

This document is based on a talk and discussion by Darren Blaney, pastor of Herne Bay Baptist Church, on 18th April 2007. Its intention is to help people understand what a Disciple of Jesus is, and how to become one.

All quotes are from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

The Great Commission

See Matt 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus told His disciples to GO and:

- 1) Make disciples of all nations
- 2) Baptise them
- 3) Teach the people to OBEY Jesus' teachings – this is the key point. Jesus did NOT say "teach them what I taught you", ie, just theory, but the practical side, ie, HOW to put His teachings into action.

This last point is largely overlooked in many Christian teachings, ie, HOW exactly do I go about putting Jesus' teachings into practise? PRACTICAL teaching is very much necessary.

As in James 2:26: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

Faith needs to be evidenced by Obedience, Actions, Deeds.

What Is A Christian?

There are several ways of referring to what we now call Christians in the New Testament:

- 1) CHRISTIAN – this term only occurs 3 times in the Bible. It literally means "Little Christ". It was the nickname given to the first believers in Antioch. It could mean:
 - a) Someone being like Christ
 - b) Someone who believed in Christ
 - c) A term of contempt given by the non-believers
- 2) FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY – Jesus said "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6). The WAY can be taken to be a JOURNEY or a WAY OF LIVING.
- 3) CHILDREN OF GOD – refers to our relationship with God. He is our loving Father.
- 4) SONS OF GOD – refers to Roman law where only sons inherit possessions, so in this case we are all sons because we ALL share Jesus' inheritance and the salvation he offers.
- 5) DISCIPLE – Christianity is Discipleship to Jesus Christ. If you are a Disciple (FOLLOWER) of Jesus, you are definitely a Christian!!
- 6) BRETHREN – Brothers and sisters, ie, part of a family.

These last 2 terms are what encompasses being a Christian, ie,

- A FOLLOWER OF JESUS
- BEING PART OF A FAMILY OF FOLLOWERS

What Is A Disciple?

History Of Discipleship

During the Exile, the rabbis feared that faith in God would be lost in Babylon, due to intermarrying and the influence of foreign cultures. They effectively pioneered discipleship by getting people to:

- 1) Be TAUGHT by the rabbi
- 2) Seeing how the rabbi LIVED HIS LIFE

This would then result in their disciples:

- 1) KNOWING what the rabbi knew
- 2) LIVING like the rabbi lived
- 3) And then TEACH OTHERS IN THE SAME WAY which is JUST WHAT JESUS DID HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER!!

The Calling Of The Apostles

See Mark 3:13-20

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

“Apostles” means “sent ones”. They were personally CALLED by Christ, but also as a group. They were told to preach (TEACH) and drive out demons (MINISTER).

Therefore a Disciple is someone who is:

- 1) CALLED by Christ
- 2) to LIVE LIKE CHRIST and SERVE HIM
- 3) to TEACH OTHERS TO DO THE SAME!!

How Do I Become A Disciple?

A theologian discovered that in the Gospels there were approximately 232 commands from Jesus!!

If we are to live like Jesus, how can we remember each one of these? Someone called Francis Schaeffer (1912 – 1984) managed to further summarise these into 7 main groups as follows:

- 1) Repent, Believe and Receive the Holy Spirit
- 2) Be Baptised
- 3) Pray
- 4) Celebrate Communion
- 5) Give Generously
- 6) Live A Life of Love: For God, your Neighbour, Your Enemy
- 7) Make Disciples, ie, teach the first 6 steps

There is no mention of CHURCH or TEACHING amongst these!!

Questions For YOU!!

- 1) How can I practically obey Jesus' commands (and the 7 steps above)
- 2) With regard to MAKING DISCIPLES, how effective is the way we do church and how else could we do it?