

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

**Study Series: Rediscovering Discipleship
Lesson 1 - Who is a Disciple?**

**Wednesday, August 24, 2022
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Christians Versus Disciples

Today, all over the world, the followers of Christ are known as Christians. But who is a Christian? Where does the word Christian come from? Interestingly, the early Christians did not call themselves Christians, neither did Jesus use the word Christians to describe His followers. From the account of the scriptures, the believers were actually named Christians by non-Christians. While the record seems to indicate it was used in a positive way, it was still a nickname given by gentiles to believers. The word Christian comes from the Greek word “christianos” which simply means follower of Christ.

“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Acts 11:25-26 (NKJV)

Before this time, the most common word the early believers used to describe themselves is the word disciple. It was started by Jesus; His followers were first called disciples. In Luke 6:13 “When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles. The early believers addressed themselves as disciples. Acts 6:1-7

Do you think there is a downside to adopting the word Christians instead of disciples?

The choice of the word disciple is a very significant one, it was meant to describe God’s intent for us as Christ followers. The word disciple comes from the Greek word, “mathētēs” which simply means a learner or a student, since primarily we are called to learn from Christ.

Matthew 11:28-29 - *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

1 Peter 2:21 *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*

What is the benefit of describing ourselves as disciples?

The Disciple as a Learner

Most people believe a disciple is a follower (probably because of the religious context), but in its fuller meaning, it means a student—as in, “one who studies.” It is very much like an apprenticeship, where someone is learning a trade or craft from a master by watching them do it and then practice. The goal of Jesus is to raise disciples who will in turn raise other disciples.

Also, the assignment Jesus gave to the church is not just to raise members but to make disciples. That is why this subject is a very important to study and fully understand.

Matthew 28:19-20 *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*

As believers, we are not just called to simply accept Christ, attend church faithfully, and live our lives as we please. We are called to become disciples; this means to become a lifelong follower of Christ, learning from Him and re-presenting Him to the world.

Jesus The Rabbi (Teacher)

One of the titles Jesus was famously called by the Jews and even His disciples is that of Rabbi. Peter (Mark 9:5, Mark 11:21) and Mary Magdalene (John 20:16) both referred to Jesus as “Rabbi.” Even the Jewish ruler Nicodemus thought that this title was appropriate for Jesus: *John 3:2 “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him”*. A rabbi (literally, “my master”) is a member of the clergy in the religion of Judaism. (John 1:38). It means the teacher and master.

If a disciple is a learner, it means he or she is learning from Jesus who is the teacher and master. The call to be a disciple is a call to learn from the master, leaning from His words and His way of life, and reproducing it, making mistakes, getting better until we master it.

John 14:12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. NKJV

What Does it Mean to Be a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

1. It starts with accepting Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the Cross as the only way to receive forgiveness of sin, obtain righteousness and eternal salvation. John 3:16, Acts 4:12
2. To abandon our former way of life and follow Jesus. *Matthew 4:19 – “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” NKJV*
3. To be devoted to learning from and following the way of the master. *1 Peter 2:21 “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*
4. To learn to live in a loving relationship in a community of other believers. *John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” NKJV*
5. To become a full partner with Christ (energized by the Holy Spirit) in fulfilling the Great Commission. Matthew 28:16–20

Being a disciple requires a greater level of commitment than just believing. Of course, it takes believing to become a Christian, but it takes commitment to become a disciple. The only kind of a Christian who can glorify God best is called a disciple. A disciple is a committed follower of Jesus Christ, committed to learning from Him (through the Holy Spirit and others) to master His way of life and to teach others to do the same. Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples because only disciples can reflect the kingdom lifestyle and penetrate the world. Many Christians think they are just called to believe, but Jesus called us to a higher calling. That call is the call to discipleship.