

## How Do We Become Disciples?

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Assuming we have witnessed and made disciples, what is next? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? How do we “become” disciples? Jesus was clear at the end of the Book of Matthew about our calling:

“**19** [As you] Go therefore and *make disciples of all nations baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Command (imperative) is “*Make Disciples*”. In Greek, μαθητεύω (mathéteuó) means to make a disciple of, train; pass on to another. The process of becoming a disciple means that we, as the Church, must train and pass on to new believers what we have learned. What does that look like? How do we become disciples?

After receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior—becoming a disciple—Jesus tells us, the first step in the new believer’s life is baptism. Baptize, in Greek: βαπτίζω (baptidzó), means a public, water baptism to proclaim our new faith in Jesus. In baptism, we say, “I believe in Jesus. I commit my life to Jesus. I am a disciple of Jesus. I am part of God’s family now.” Baptism is also a picture of dying to ourselves and rising to new life in Jesus. The Apostle Paul explains baptism to the Romans:

**4**We were buried therefore with him [Jesus] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

Paul also wrote this to the believers at Corinth:

**17**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18**All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

As new creations, we have cast off our faulty thinking patterns, our evil ways of behaving and our sinful lifestyles, which separated us from God. We begin to think and act differently. The Holy Spirit, which we received when we believed, helps us. No longer do we ignore the “still, small voice” of the Spirit, which speaks to us and guides us into righteousness.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, King David wrote in Psalm 23:

**1**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**2**He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. **3**He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. **(Psalm 23:1-3)**

After baptism, the second step is to follow and learn about Jesus. "He [God] leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake" by teaching me about what Jesus did and what He said. I must learn and follow Jesus' words and teachings.

We all have much to learn about righteousness and salvation in Jesus. As the Church, we have the responsibility to teach and help believers. In baptism, the Church also acknowledges our responsibility to help new believers grow and learn about Jesus. So, baptism is also the Church's commitment to the new Christian to teach them.

We are not on our own. We have God's Holy Spirit to help and guide us. We have God's Word—the Bible—to show us how God has worked throughout human history. We have the Church to help teach us about Jesus. God provides to us many people and resources to help us learn to become disciples of Jesus.

We do not start out knowing much about being a disciple. Even if we grew up in the Church or around Christianity, something changes when we surrender to Jesus. We now see life through spiritual eyes. Things which did not make sense before we committed our lives to Jesus, now, start to make sense. Ideas that were unclear to us now become clearer. Becoming a disciple of Jesus opens a new world of understanding and wisdom.

Therefore, we spend our lives learning about and following Jesus. This is how we become disciples of Jesus: We follow His commands and teachings. We live by Jesus' Words, which is the Word of God. To be sure, Jesus rose from the grave proving that everything He said was true. We can trust Jesus. His Word is Trustworthy. His Word is Truth.

So, as we follow Jesus together, we actually become the "Church" that God has intended for us to be. In John 13:

**34**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **35**By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." **(John 13:34-35)**

Let us be encouraged by Jesus' words in John 14:

**15**"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. **16**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, **17**even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. **(John 14:15-17)**

Sometimes it seems like a difficult task to follow Jesus. How can we follow Jesus in a world that rejects Him? How can we stand up against immorality and violence against Christianity? In the midst of it all, Jesus said:

**“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)**

Our Lord has “overcome” the world. With Jesus in our hearts, we are also overcomers! Jesus said that, in the midst of the storms of life, we can have peace. Even when all around are against us, in Jesus we have overcome the world. Let us be clear, Jesus also promised us “tribulation”, which means difficulties and trials. That is not usually a promise that people like to remember: Tribulation. Jesus also promised peace, in the midst of tribulation!

Yet, God even has a purpose in our suffering. James, who is Jesus’ half-brother since they both had Mary as their mother, encourages us to keep pressing on:

**2**Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, **3**for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness [perseverance]. **4**And let steadfastness [perseverance] have its full effect, that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

We can be perfect. “Perfect” in Greek is τέλειος (tel'-i-os). “Telios” means mature, complete, perfect, reached its end. In English, we get the word “telescope” from the Greek root of “telios”. The telescope must reach its complete length to work properly.

“Telios”, mature and complete, is especially referring to the completeness of Christian character. That is, we become mature in Jesus and lack nothing. It is possible to be mature and lack nothing. We have everything we need in Jesus to become complete. As disciples of Jesus, we look to God to take care of our needs. God enables us to serve Him and share His Word wherever we are, because we trust in Him. Trials result in maturity for Christians.

My last name is Neufeld. My ancestors were farmers in Germany, Ukraine and Prussia (which no longer exists). In the original language of German, “Neufeld” means “One who clears and/or plants a new field”. Today, I still plant God’s Word in new fields. Someone else will follow and water the seeds. Another may tend the plants and remove weeds. Another person will harvest. In all of this, God gives both the seed and the growth. We all rejoice together. We give glory to God together. We witness and make disciples together! We learn and grow in Jesus together! In the Church, there is a lot of togetherness. Jesus calls us to serve not as lone superheroes: We serve Jesus together, as the Church. We must love one another. In our unity of love and purpose, we are witnesses of Jesus!

So, how do we become disciples? After hearing the witness of salvation in Jesus Christ, we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Jesus then commands baptism as our public proclamation of faith in Him. Further, the Church teaches new believers so we

learn to follow Jesus. We “become” disciples when we: 1) Receive; 2) Baptize; and, 3) Teach. May God continue to teach us to be faithful witnesses and disciples of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray...