

Becoming a Christ-Follower— A Disciple

Romans 10:9-13 says, *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”* (emphasis added).

What does it mean to be saved? We use terms like “being saved, disciple, Christian, believer, and Christ-follower.” However, we must move beyond just terminology to understand what it means to become and to be a Christ-follower—a **disciple** of Christ.

A disciple is a person who follows the teaching and example of another person. Those who follow Jesus Christ are His disciples. They are sometimes called followers of Christ. They are also called Christians.¹ The **good news** is that Christ calls everyone to be His disciple (Matthew 28:16-20).

The Good News!

We call the message of salvation “the good news.” Why? Because the good news of God is that Jesus lived, died, and rose again so that people could be brought into a right relationship with God by placing their faith in Christ and living daily in obedience to Him. Salvation is not something we earn, but a free gift God offers for those who will accept it. This is the good news of the **gospel!**

What Is the Gospel?

Gospel is from the Greek word *evangel*, which means “the good news of victory.” The victory of Jesus over sin has made salvation possible for all people. This is the message of the gospel. It is the message that God loves sinners and wants to forgive them. He wants them to be free from spiritual death.²

Key Understandings:

Grace: God’s love, mercy, forgiveness, and power at work in our lives. God freely gives us His grace because He loves us, not because we deserve it.

- Eternal life, including heaven, is a free gift (Romans 6:23).
- It is not earned or deserved (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Humanity: You and me.

- Humankind was created in the image of God for relationship with God.
- Sin keeps us from having the kind of relationship with God that He desires (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

- We cannot remedy the sin problem by ourselves (Ephesians 2:9).

God: Creator of everything, the Ruler of the universe. Has always existed and always will exist. He reveals himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God is:

- Loving: He loves us and wants us to have the kind of life and relationship with Him for which we were created.
- Just: He holds us accountable for our sins (Romans 6:23).
- Merciful: He wants a relationship with us and offers us a way to be in a right relationship with Him through the atoning work of Jesus.

Jesus Christ: God’s Son. He came to earth to show us God’s love and teach us many things.

- He is fully God and fully human (John 1:1, 14).
- What He did:
 - He suffered and died for our sins (Isaiah 53:6).
 - He rose from the dead and is in heaven preparing a place for us (John 14:12).
 - He offers us the gift of new life with God (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Faith: Faith is trust in action.

- What it is not: Mere intellectual assent or temporal (James 2:19).
- What it is: Repenting of—turning from—our sins and trusting Christ alone for our eternal life (Mark 1:15 and John 1:12).

Holy Spirit: The Spirit of God who changes our hearts and empowers us to live for God as we trust Jesus as our Savior.

- Everyone who turns from their sins and places their faith in Christ receives a new heart (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Everyone who comes to Christ will love Him and desire to serve Him (Romans 12:1).
- Everyone who comes to Christ is empowered by His Spirit to live the godly life (2 Peter 1:3-4).

How Do You Become a Christ-Follower--A Disciple?

A believer (Christian/Disciple) is one who has given his/her life to Christ. Although there is no prescribed formula, we can give our life to Christ and become His disciples by,

- *Admitting* we have sinned and are in need of God’s forgiveness (Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23)—turning our back to sin and our life toward God (2 Corinthians 7:10; Acts 2:38).
- *Believing* that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, trusting in

Him alone for salvation and eternal life (John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 16:31).

- *Confessing* our faith in Jesus as Lord and Committing to follow Him (1 John 1:9; Romans 10:9-10). If we confess Jesus is Lord, we will be saved. This means that if we believe Jesus is who He claims to be, we will be brought into a right relationship with God.
- *Living daily* in obedience to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. A relationship with God is not just about what we say or believe, it also is about how we live--transformed from the inside-out. We commit to live daily according to God's Word and leading. This doesn't happen by sheer human willpower. God gives us His Spirit to guide, teach, and empower us to live a life surrendered to God.
- *Growing* in your faith and relationship with God. This involves Bible study, prayer, worship, service to others, and being a part of a faith community.

What If I Am a Christ-Follower—A Disciple? How Can I Share My Faith?

Sharing our faith is an act of love. That is, we should see others as God does and love others as Christ would. We live out our faith in obedience to God and share the good news because it's a transformational message. The way (method) each person chooses to share their faith will vary. However, believers should keep in mind:

- *Your walk must match your talk.* Actions speak louder than words. The key for others believing that Christianity is true is followers living the life of authentic faith.

- *Build true relationships--real relationships based on friendship, care, concern, and brotherly/sisterly love.* A relationship developed with ulterior motives is misguided.
- *When questions are asked or opposing viewpoints are expressed, respond with gentleness, respect, and humility.* Don't beat people down with the Bible, but offer scriptural counsel and guidance when appropriate.
- *When non-believers show openness, share the good news of Jesus.* Their readiness opens the door to challenge them to seek God's forgiveness.
- *Sharing our own story might be the best way to introduce people to Christ.* Something so life-changing as being transformed by God is a story worth sharing.

Resources

Melissa Hammer. *Faith Words for Kids: A Dictionary for Parents, Teachers, and Children* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press Kansas City, 2011).

Charles Shaver. *Witnessing Without Fear* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press Kansas City 2001).

Faith Among Friends (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press Kansas City, 2014).

1. J. Wesley Eby, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible & Christian Doctrine in Everyday English* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004), 78.

2. *Ibid.*, 119.