

Lesson 18 TRUE DISCIPLES

Herein is My Father Glorified, that Ye Bear Much Fruit: So Shall Ye Be My Disciples - John 15:8

What makes a life worth living? Worth to Whom? From God's perspective is your life worth living?

I. Introduction

- a. The passage under our scrutiny today focuses on the word **DISCIPLE**. In the New Testament this word is the rendering of the Greek word *mathetes*, for "learner," and occurs frequently.
- b. The meaning applies to one who professes to have learned certain principles from another and maintains that learning on that other's authority. It is applied principally to the **followers** of Jesus (Matt 5:1; 8:21; etc.)
- c. It is applied sometimes to the followers of John the Baptist (Matt 9:14) and of the Pharisees (Matt 22:16). It is used in a special manner to indicate the **twelve** (Matt 10:1; 11:1; 20:17).
- d. In the words of Jesus we find that **all** true disciples will bear fruit. The question is will the quantity of fruit be some fruit or much fruit? *Matt 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. KJV*
- e. From our reading and observation of Christian history we can see that there is a category of disciple who bears **much fruit**. In many such cases we know their names (like Paul) and we have benefitted by their fruitfulness.
- f. Christian history also shows us that the **vast majority** of disciples bear only some fruit. They remain anonymous to church history and while their fruit is known to God it may be unknown to all but a few of their contemporaries. *Acts 17:12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. KJV*
- g. The third classification of disciple that we find on the pages of Scripture is that of the **false-disciple**.
- h. These are often found embedded within the congregation but in the end their **lack** of genuine faith is revealed for what it is and these bear no fruit. *Matt 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. KJV*
- i. As students of the Bible it is instructive for us to examine these three types of disciples and to **evaluate** for ourselves as to which category we belong.

II. False Disciples

- a. From the beginning of the Bible through to its very end we have examples of persons who are **mixed** in with the people of God who are not really of the people of God. *Rom 9:6 For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: KJV*
- b. **Jesus** Himself warned His hearers that such would be the case in a variety of statements to that effect. *Matt 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; KJV*
- c. From outward appearances one may **not detect** the false disciple given the fact that these may often be engaged in the very same religious activities as true disciples. *Matt 7:22-23 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. KJV*
- d. The Satanic purpose of these false disciples is to weaken, to deceive, and to **destroy** the fruit bearing effectiveness of true disciples. *Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. KJV*
- e. These do not possess the **Spirit** of God; theirs is not a true faith. Their words pervert truth and their ideas of Christianity are heretical even though they may seem learned and hold themselves out as teachers. *2 Peter 2:1-2 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. KJV*
- f. Let us be warned and let us be **vigilant** for the presence of these false disciples who would make shipwreck of the Christian faith. *1 Tim 1:18-20 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. NIV*

III. The Some Fruit Bearers

- a. This category of Christian discipleship is the many. Those who bear **some** fruit make up the majority of Christianity. *Mark 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. KJV*
- b. These many disciples mostly remain anonymous, they quietly work in the background and while their fruit bearing may be but **occasional** it is still received by God to His glory.
- c. It is instructive to think through some of the **distinctions** which set these disciples apart from their more fruitful brethren.
 1. First, we must bear in mind that it is **God** who chooses and gifts disciples whomsoever He wills to fulfill whatever role and purpose He decides. *John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, KJV*

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2. Notwithstanding the choosing and gifting of God, however, each individual disciple is **responsible** to some extent for his own growth and development as a disciple. 2 Tim 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. KJV*
3. For this reason many disciples who merely produce some fruit do so because of **self imposed** limitations on their own spiritual lives. Heb 5:13-14 *For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. KJV*
4. For example, many who merely bear some fruit are more preoccupied with their own **psychological** safety than they are with spiritual fruit bearing. They fear the judgment of men more than the judgment of God. Luke 12:8 *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: KJV*
5. Many of these disciples are satisfied with a very small measure of the knowledge of Christ's grace and very little spiritual understanding. They do not realize that Christ's desire for them is **abundance**. Col 1:9 *that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; KJV*
6. These are often quite comfortable in their lives and religious routine and have never learned the value of utter **brokenness** and complete yieldedness of self to the Lord. Matt 21:44 *And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: KJV*
7. The idea of service and fruit to many of these disciples is a secondary and a very subordinate one at that. Apparently the lack of an earnest **longing** for much fruit does not trouble them. Rev 3:17 *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: KJV*
- d. These may be disciples, but many know not what they are missing **experientially** that is available from the banquet table of Lord to be appropriated and enjoyed in this life. Ps 34:8 *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. KJV*

IV. The Much Fruit Bearers

- a. There have always been a **smaller** number of God's people, an inner circle, who have sought to serve Him with their whole heart. These (by grace) have learned to trust the Lord and believe His word. Matt 17:1 *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, KJV*
- b. Souls that have heard the call to live **wholly** for their Lord, to give their life for Him as He gave His for them, can never be satisfied with some fruit, their cry is to bear as much fruit as is possible. *"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose" Jim Elliot*
- c. Of those who bear much fruit, Christ says: "These are My disciples, such as I would have them be-these are true disciples." From God's viewpoint they live a life **worth living**.
- d. In spite of their diligence to bear much fruit and their continual devotion to Christ they take nothing for granted and do not rest on their laurels, but rather, frequently **examine** themselves. 1 Cor 9:26-27 *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. KJV*
- e. The much fruit bearers make a **difference** in the lives of others and exemplify what it means to be the disciple of Jesus. These are disciples after the Lord's heart who are worthy to be called His true disciple.
- f. To these disciples the Lord will utter the words of **Matt 25:23** *Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. KJV*
- g. To the extent that we as disciples have a **choice** whether we bear some fruit or much fruit let us pursue a life that has value to the Lord; let us pursue the bearing of much fruit.

V. Application

- a. We ought to consider these words most seriously. Be not content with the thought of gradually doing a little more or living a little more Christ-like as you get older.
- b. Take the words, *much fruit*, as the revelation of your heavenly Vine of what you must be, of what you can be.
- c. Let the words call you to look anew upon the Vine, an undertaking to live out its heavenly fullness in you.
- d. Let them waken in you once again the faith and the confession: "I am a branch of the true Vine; I can bear much fruit to His glory, and the glory of the Father."
- e. As you examine yourself, to which one of the three categories of discipleship do you belong?
- f. To whom does your life hold the most value? If it is not Christ what needs to change?