

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

# THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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## Disciple of Christ

Scripture uses a number of terms to refer to those who are Christians. For instance, everyone who is a true Christian is also a saint (**1 Cor. 1:2**), priest (**1 Pet. 2:5**), and citizen of Christ's kingdom (**Eph. 2:19**). Each of these terms helps us better understand responsibilities and privileges associated with being a Christian.

The same can be said for what is perhaps the most basic of terms Scripture assigns to the Christian: disciple of Christ (**Acts 11:26**). Consider some things Scripture teaches related to this term and what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus.

The core meaning of the word translated disciple is "pupil" or "learner" (see *Strong G3101 & Thayer*). One who is a true disciple of Jesus first and foremost *learns* from Him.

Notice **Luke 11:1**: *When He finished praying in a certain place, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."*

This is a simple but telling example of discipleship. Those who are Jesus' disciples have an eager desire to learn about Him and His teachings. They continuously "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*," as all Christians are commanded to do (**2 Pet. 3:18**). Such growth is motivated by a strong spiritual appetite (**Matt. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:2**).

Those who have the interest in Jesus that is demanded of discipleship need not fear an inability to learn from Him. As the hymn *Hark, the Gentle Voice* says, "He will teach if you will learn."

In other words, Jesus has left us with all that we need to learn from Him: His written Word. We need only study Scripture with diligence and the heart Jesus is looking for (**Luke 8:15**), and we will continuously learn from Him.

While learning from Christ is crucial, discipleship does not end there. A Christian might study the collection of false doctrines known as Calvinism to better understand these teachings that have deeply intruded "Christendom." Such does not make that Christian a disciple of John Calvin, though.

This principle applies to being *Christ's* disciple as well. Many who learn Jesus' teachings are not truly His disciples.

Notice **John 8:31**: *Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed Him, If ye abide in my Word, then are ye truly my disciples; Abiding in Jesus' Word involves not only learning His teachings, but also submitting to them.*

By abiding in His Word, the true disciple becomes continuously more *like* Him. In **Luke 6:40**, Jesus said, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.*"

As the Master Teacher, Jesus has not only taught us how to live, but He has *shown* us how to live (cf. **John 13:13-15**).

For instance, the faithful disciple of Christ will develop an attitude of servitude and humility, as our Savior exemplified (**Matt. 20:25-28; Phil. 2:3-8**). The faithful disciple is forgiving, like the Master (**Col. 3:13**), and faithfully does what is right through trials, like Jesus exemplified (**1 Pet. 2:21-23**). To be Christ's faithful disciples, we must adopt His

character and value system as our own.

Following Christ's lead also involves following Him into persecutions that inevitably result when one chooses to do what is right. Just as the Teacher faced mistreatment, His disciples should expect the same (**Matt. 10:24-25**).

While persecutions are inevitable for those who follow Christ's lead, the faithful disciple is willing to accept whatever hardships result from the choice to be like Him.

Jesus taught this principle in **Luke 9**. In **verse 22**, He warned, "*The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.*"

Matthew and Mark's accounts inform us that Peter rebuked Jesus after He said this (**Matt. 16:22**; **Mark 8:32**). Peter even said, "*Far be it from you, Lord! This will never be done to you*" (**Matt. 16:22**).

In His response, Jesus showed Peter (and us) that He *would* endure the forementioned sufferings, choosing the Father's will over personal comfort (cf. **Matt. 16:23**). Jesus accepted whatever suffering resulted from the choice to do what is right.

In this context, **Luke 9:23** goes on to say, "*And He said unto all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*"

In other words, just as Jesus denied His own comforts and accepted hardships to submit to the Father, those who are truly following Him do the same. Notice that this is not just something done one time, but rather something done "*daily*" (i.e., continuously). Jesus demands that we be willing to deny ourselves of *anything* that stands between

us and Him. If we are not this loyal to Him, we cannot be His disciple (**Luke 14:26-33**).

The one who dedicates him or herself to Christ's teachings in this way will bear fruit that shows his or her allegiance to Christ.

Jesus taught this in **John 15**. After stressing the need to abide in Him, "*the true vine*" (**verse 1**), in order to have essential spiritual nutrients (**verses 2-7**), Jesus said, "*In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so you will be my disciples*" (**verse 8**).

True discipleship yields fruit that glorifies God, and demonstrates to the world that one belongs to Christ.

For instance, notice what is said by Jesus in **John 13:34-35**: *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* Just as love is a primary characteristic of Jesus, those who are His disciples must bear the fruit of love in response to the love He has shown. Such provides evidence that He is our Teacher.

These passages demonstrate that while *becoming* a disciple of Jesus happens at once, when a repentant believer is "*baptized into Christ*" (cf. **Rom. 6:3**; **Gal. 3:27**), *being* Christ's disciple is a *lifestyle* of commitment.

Jesus has done His part as the perfect Teacher and Master. It is up to each of us to learn from Him, devote ourselves fully to His teachings, and loyally serve Him. This is the lifestyle of the true disciple of Christ.

- Michael Hickox

The Sincere Milk of God's Word

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