

The Journey of Discipleship:

Becoming a disciple isn't a destination, it's a journey that continues over the course of one's lifetime. It's a daily choice to live more and more like Jesus. Think of it as a train ride. You are the train, riding down parallel rails.

One rail is loving God with everything you are and everything you have. The other rail is loving your neighbor as yourself. And tying those rails together are a series of qualities of a disciple that keep everything in alignment. As you travel along this journey, you will notice the scenery changing.

First, you'll notice the way you think changing. As you study God's Word, you'll discover that the Bible isn't just a "good book", it's the perfect guidebook for life. And as fill your mind with God's truth, you'll notice yourself thinking more like Jesus.

Second, you'll notice your attitudes changing. Becoming a disciple isn't just a matter of study. It's a process of applying the lessons that have been learned. As you experience the difference living by God's Word makes, you'll find yourself looking at life more like Jesus.

Third, you'll notice your lifestyle changing. As you live in community with other disciples, you will receive encouragement for your own journey. And when you begin to get off-track, you'll have friends to help you get back on the rails. As you receive encouragement and accountability, you'll find yourself walking more like Jesus.

So, what are those qualities that tie the rails together? We've identified eight to get you started.

1. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ knows Jesus as Savior.

A disciple has faced the ugly truth that he has sinned, is sorry for it and wants to turn away from that life, toward a life of following Jesus. He believes that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for his sin, has asked God for forgiveness and has invited Jesus to guide his life. The result is a life that begins to reflect transformation as the Holy Spirit's presence changes him. Evidence of this change is demonstrated in verbal testimony and baptism. (John 3:14-16; John 14:6; John 15:7; Romans 6:3-4)

2. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ...worships God collectively and personally.

A disciple lives for God's glory. He lives every moment of life as an act of worship. But he also knows that being intentional about setting time aside to engage with God is an essential part of being a disciple. Evidence of this understanding is demonstrated by gathering with fellow disciples on a weekly basis to join together in worship. He also sets aside time daily for personal spiritual disciplines. And, when possible, establishes worship as a priority of family life. (Hebrews 10:25; Hebrews 13:15; Psalm 96:8)

3. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ studies the Bible daily and applies what is learned.

A disciple understands that the Bible contains everything we need to know for our relationships with God and with each other. As its lessons are applied, lives are transformed. So the disciple has developed a plan for personal Bible study and finds ways to put what is learned into practice. Evidence of this practice is the disciple talking about what he is learning and in seeing his life change as a result. (Ephesians 5:8-11; 2 Timothy 3:15; Psalm 119:11)

4. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ experiences a growing relationship with God.

A disciple lives a life of change. Day by day he knows God better. Day by day, the Holy Spirit is transforming his life. Evidence of this growth is demonstrated by the disciple's life becoming increasingly characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (John 14:16-17, 26; John 15:8; 1 Corinthians 2:4, 10-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 5:22-23)

5. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ shows the love of Jesus through attitude and action.

As a disciple experiences God's unconditional love, he is enabled to sacrificially love others. Evidence of this is demonstrated by accepting people for who they are, viewing others as greater than oneself, refusing to listen to or engage in gossip, speaking positively of all people and engaging with his community both inside and outside of church ministries. (1 Corinthians 13; John 13:34-35; Romans 12; 1 John 4:11, 20-21; Matthew 25:31-46)

6. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ understands and uses his spiritual gifts to glorify God.

Every disciple has been given special abilities to do the works of ministries God has planned for him. Sometimes they are consistent with natural abilities and sometimes they enable the disciple to do something new. Understanding these "gifts" is a key ingredient to effectiveness and fulfillment in ministry. Evidence of this understanding is found in the disciple engaging in ministry that is consistent with his spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; James 2:14-17, 26; James 2:22; John 15:16-17)

7. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ follows Christ's example of sharing the gospel through prayer, conduct, friendship and words.

A disciple longs to share his relationship with God and is intentionally in the process of pointing others toward Jesus. Evidence of this desire is building relationships with and praying for pre-Christians, an ability to communicate the gospel and lead others to Christ, and reproducing himself in the lives of others. (2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:18-20; James 5:20; Colossians 1:6, 10-12)

8. A healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ places God first in all areas of his life.

A disciple has discovered the joy of a life fully surrendered to Christ. He has learned that everything in life is a gift from God. He owns it all; we are stewards of His resources. Evidence of this is seen in the disciple being faithful in tithing and involvement in ministry. (Galatians 2:20; Luke 10:27; Luke 14:26, 33)

Self-Assessment Guide

Now that you know the qualities that describe a healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ, we invite you to do a little self-assessment. Take a few moments and think about your life. Which qualities are strengths for you? Which are areas that could use some growth? Now, which quality do you sense God pointing you toward? Write it down here:

Now, what are you going to do about it? Is it a matter of needing to know more about the subject? Are there some attitudes in your heart that need to be addressed? Do you need someone to encourage you?

Whatever your level of need, we want to help. We want to do all we can to see you become a healthy, growing, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ. Feel free to contact us, and we'll be happy to help you take your next few steps in the journey of discipleship.