

# What is a Disciple?

by Bill Bright

You can be a great scientist, a famous statesman, or even a great theologian, and still fall short of God's plan for your life. If you do not understand and experience basic truths about discipleship taught by the apostle Paul and Jesus Christ, you are not his disciple, and you won't be able to disciple others.

The apostle Paul wrote to his spiritual son, his disciple Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:1–2: “Oh, Timothy, my son, be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you. For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others.” [Living Bible]

A disciple is one who loves God, our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his heart, soul, and mind, and tries to become more and more like him through a life of faith and obedience.

## The following are some characteristics of such “trustworthy men”:

1. **A disciple must have assurance of salvation.** He must know that he is a child of God, that Christ dwells within him.
2. **A disciple walks in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is responsible for everything that happens in the life of a believer—his new birth, daily walk, understanding of Scripture, and prayers. He produces the fruit of the Spirit in us, which enables us to live holy lives and witness for Christ.
3. **A disciple demonstrates love for God, his neighbor, his fellow disciples, and his enemies.** Jesus commands us to love God with all of our hearts, with all of our souls, with all of our minds, and he also commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves.
4. **A disciple is one who knows how to read, study, memorize, and meditate upon the Word of God, to hide its truths in his heart.** It is impossible to walk in the fullness of God's Holy Spirit without an understanding of God's Word. The reverse is also true—you can't understand God's Word without the Holy Spirit.
5. **A true disciple of Jesus is a man or woman of prayer.** The Lord Jesus Christ, who spent 40 days in prayer and fasting in the wilderness, is our great example of this.
6. **The disciple is one who is obedient, who studies the Word of God, and obeys the commands of God in a lifestyle that honors the Lord Jesus Christ.**
7. **A disciple is one who trusts God and lives a life of faith.** Scripture reminds us that “without faith it is impossible to please God.”
8. **A disciple understands God's grace.** God loves us unconditionally, whether we obey him or not. This is the opposite of legalism, the primary heresy of the Christian life, which urges us to try to obey God's laws in our own wisdom, our own strength, and our own power.
9. **A disciple is one who witnesses for Christ as a way of life.** As Christians we are to bear fruit, according to John 15:8. This includes the fruit of souls brought into Christ's kingdom as well as the fruit of the Spirit.



10. **A true disciple of the Lord Jesus worships God in the fellowship of his church.** He is involved in his church through study, worship, prayer, witnessing, and the stewardship of his time, talent, and treasure.

If you want to become a disciple of our Savior and be a discipler of others, you can begin today. Develop the practice of spending time alone each day with God in prayer and in his Word. Pray for people who will meet weekly with you, who will commit themselves to changing the world through evangelism and discipleship. The world desperately needs such a change, but only our Lord Jesus Christ has the power and plan to change men and nations.

