

Study 0093

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE MARKETPLACE (3)

In reviewing **John 8:31-59** in Study 0092, we made some important notes, about who is not a Christian. We noted that you are not a Christian, if the following apply to you:

- a) You believe the words of God or His miracles, but not in Jesus as the Messiah, the Saviour of mankind from sin.
- b) You do not adhere with all gravity to Jesus' teachings.
- c) You do not continue in (walk in, live by) the word of God daily (**Acts 2:41-42**).
- d) You make a practice or habit of sinning (**1 John 3:4-10**)!
- e) You attend a church, which is known for sound doctrinal teachings of holiness, humility, the Holy Spirit, etc., but you do not practice same.
- f) Someone who serves and deeply loves God is your parent, mentor, pastor, or spiritual leader, but you are not following in their steps, neither are you following Jesus Christ's teachings (**1 Corinthians 11:1**).
- g) You look to a pastor or a ministry for deliverance, not to the word of God.
- h) There is no place in your heart for the word of God (**Matthew 13:19-22**).
- i) You profess God as your Father, but your love for Him and His word is lacking (**1 John 4:20-21; 5:1-3; Matthew 15:3, 7-9**).
- j) You do the deeds of the devil (**John 10:10; Revelation 21:5-8; 22:15; 2 John 1:9**).
- k) You are just not able to heed the word of God (**Acts 7:51**).
- l) The doctrine or 'philosophy' of death you believe, does not include the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (**Acts 17:22-34**).
- m) You rely on your pedigree or ancestry, rather than on the finished work of Christ on the cross at Calvary, as the basis of your eternal salvation and your standing before God (**1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 6:14**).
- n) You live contrary to your claims of being a follower of the teachings of Christ (**Galatians 1:13-24; Acts 9:1-5**).

We concluded by asking us to do a self-examination of our profession of faith in Christ (**2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27**).

In this study, we will be looking at what it truly means to be a Christian, as we look at the beginnings of Christianity.

Who Truly is a Christian? (1)

We know that the term 'Christian' was first used in Antioch to describe the disciples of Jesus Christ (**Acts 11:26**). But in **Acts 19:1-6**, there was some confusion about some people who were called 'disciples', but who it turned out were disciples of John the Baptist's teachings, and not disciples of Jesus Christ. And since they were not disciples of Jesus Christ, they had yet to receive the Holy Spirit; a major indicator of a Christian (**Romans 8:9**)! But before we delve into who a Christian truly is, we would take a historical look at the evolution of disciples of Jesus Christ, and what the Lord said about being His disciple.

A Historical Perspective

In **Luke 5:1-11**, we see how Peter, Andrew, James and John, the first disciples of Jesus, were called. We note that upon the miracle of the draught of the fishes, these fishermen addressed the issue of their unworthiness to be thus blessed because of their sinfulness, before the Lord asked them to follow Him. We find that upon their acceptance by the Lord, they were immediately called away from their profession (**Luke 5:10; Matthew 9:9; John 1:43**); and

they themselves, “*forsook all, and followed Him*” (**Luke 5:11; Mark 1:18, 20; Luke 5:27-28**). In **John 1:29-39**, we are told that the very first encounter these first disciples had with the Lord came through the introduction of John the Baptist. Thereafter, Andrew went and fetched his brother, Simon, who is more commonly known as Peter (**John 1:40-42**). This first encounter did not really make them disciples of Jesus, until the miracle of the fishes, where their utter sinfulness was made abundantly manifest, and their need for salvation obvious. The first set of disciples (all the early disciples of Jesus) were in fact not really born again, as we now know it, until after the death and resurrection of Lord (**John 20:19-22**).

We can infer from the experience of the early disciples, the absolute necessity of the realization of their sinfulness, and their acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah, to be the basis of their salvation (**Matthew 5:3 NLT**); and, their willingness to leave all and follow Jesus, once they had come to that realization, and had been saved and delivered from sin and satanic affliction (**John 9:1-39; Mark 10:46-52**).

Foundational Principles

In the well known sermon on the Mount (**Matthew Chapters 5 through 7**), the Lord speaks of discipleship, not just as people merely following Him from place to place, but as people who do (or follow) also, His teachings (**Matthew 7:21-27; Luke 6:46-49**). Again, in **Luke 9:23-24; Mark 8:34-35; Matthew 16:20-25**, the Lord speaks of a disciple as a person who has denied himself and who takes up his cross daily and follows Him. But perhaps the Lord’s most profound statement about a disciple is to be found in **Luke 14:25-33**, because He made it to a large crowd that was following Him at the time. The conclusion of the whole matter for the Lord was that a disciple has to (a) forsake all, including parents, spouse, children, siblings, and even his own life; and (b) bear his cross and go after Jesus daily! Another profound thing about the Lord’s statement here is that, discipleship is not to be rushed into, but people who want to be disciples must first sit down and count the cost, before they enter into it! This cost counting is not so much as being with a view to abandoning being a disciple, but it is about becoming aware that there is a great personal price to pay—the loss of all things (**Philippians 3:7-14; Mark 10:17-31**)! Indeed, in **John 6:26-67**, the bible records that many of Jesus’ disciples turned back from following Him, after He elaborated on the matter of Communion, which was yet to be instituted, and little understood at the time. This seemed to be His way of eliminating ‘social’ followers, while ensuring that only those who were prepared to be wholly given over to Him, remain!

In **Luke 9:57-62**, the Lord speaks of the earthly deprivation and personal sacrifice which those who follow Him shall suffer—no place to lay one’s head, the priority of the gospel over family and social obligations, and, the absolute necessity of focus in prosecuting the gospel. Indeed, **Luke 8:1-3**, gives inkling into how Jesus and His disciples were sustained.

Conclusion

Historical accounts may not necessarily address certain matters; for the historian may assume certain things based on what may have generally been the practice at the time, which unfortunately, may be foreign, if not strange, to people of another era or generation. However, the Lord’s statements on discipleship summarize the experience of the early disciples of His, and thus, tells us what our own experience ought to be once we are saved through our faith in His finished work at Calvary, as follows: A Christian is someone who, having been saved from sin and things that held him bound:

1. Follows the Lord’s teachings and injunctions continually. He is not someone who merely follows Jesus from place to place or from church to church (**Luke 14:25-27**);

2. Forsakes all, including his own life, and is prepared to go anywhere the Lord would want him to go. That is, he is completely the Lord's (**Romans 14:7-8**); and,
3. First sits down and counts the cost of being a Christian; hence, is willing to bear his cross daily, suffer whatever deprivations are necessary, and, make the sacrifices required by the Lord (**Philippians 3:7-8; 4:11-12**).

We leave us with the following thoughts:

- (a) Have you counted the cost of being a Christian yet?
- (b) What is it costing you now to be a Christian?