# **New Year 2024 - Am I a Disciple**

Pastor Carl Van Vliet

Discipleship / Jn 15:1–17; John 8:30–32

In 2023 we had a vision and prayer focus we were asking God to create us to be as a church this year. How many of you in this room, not by show of hands but simply in yourself answer this question: **How many of you know and can say what the 5 focus’s of our vision for 2023 are?**

What were they?

• **That we would be Gospel-centric people**

• **That we would be a Worshiping people**

• **That we would be a praying people**

• **That we would be a Serving people**

• **That we would be a Generous people**

**How many of you , looking at those 5 focus’s would say that we have become more known as a people like these 5 characteristics?**

**Each of these 5 characteristics are just that, characteriestics that describe something else - A Disciple.**

AM I A Disciple? What does that question mean? I am a Believer, so I must be a disciple. I am a Christian, so I must be a disciple.

In the Greek the word for Disciple is **μαθητής (mathētēs)** It means in the generic sense of the word “a Follower, or a Pupil” It is a word that describes followers of John the Baptist, Followers of the Pharisees, etc. In the Greek culture as an example, this is a word used to describe the pupils of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates and other Greek Philosophers. (Alexander the Great was a μαθητής (mathētēs), a disciple of Aristotle) It is also a word to describe the followers of Jesus, generically.

This word is used 275 times in the New Testament, specifically in the four Gospels and the Book of Acts

We must first understand that not everywhere we read the word disciple in scripture does it carry the weight of what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus, sometimes it is the writers generic use of the word simply meaning someone who was following in the simplest form of that term.

I would use this term in this generic manner to describe those who we have “followed on social media” We are seeing what they are doing and saying, and sometimes we like, comment or share it, but we are not deeply committed to them.

Yet I think for many we find ourselves following Jesus more in this generic understanding of the use of the word disciple, We follow Jesus like we follow someone on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram and we like some stuff but scroll past other stuff that we don’t necessarily like or agree with.

This use of the term Disciple - Follower is more Anthropocentric in its devotion. Anthropocentric meaning “Human Centered, Man Centered or more specific in this context - “Me Centered”

The discipleship Jesus is calling us to is not an anthropocentric discipleship, it simply is not about me, it is simply not about you. It is Christocentric in that it is all about Christ, becoming Christ like!

So to help us answer the question “Am I a Disciple” We first have to ask a couple additional questions:

Does being a believer make me a disciple?

So here is the answer: one can be a believer and NOT be a disciple.

Greg Laurie senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California, puts it like this:

Greg Laurie Sermon Archive (Wanted: Disciples)

Isn’t a disciple and a believer just different descriptions of the same thing?” Not necessarily. You could say that every disciple is a believer. But you could not necessarily say that every believer is a disciple. In other words, every disciple of Jesus obviously is already a believer. But just because you are a believer doesn’t mean that you have become a disciple. There are specific challenges and requirements that are laid out in scripture as to what you must do to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In [John 8:30-31](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Jn8.30-31) Jesus speaks to “believers” and gives them a distinction: [John 8:30–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Jn8.30-31) “30 As He spoke these words, **many believed in Him**. 31 **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him**, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples**(μαθητής
 - mathētēs)** indeed.”

Jesus makes plain here, there are those who believe who are not disciples. There is more to being a disciple than merely believing in Jesus

So to our second question: Does calling ourselves “Christian” make us disciples?

[Acts 11:26](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ac11.26) “26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. **And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch**.”

If we apply a culturally informed viewpoint of what a “Christian” is, we could impose an answer that we are a “Disciple of Jesus” based on a cultural definition of “Christian”:

Today a Christian is defined in a number of different ways:

I go to church occasionally, I am a Christian.
I was raised in a Christian, therefore I am a Christian.
I am a “Insert favorite denominational flavor here” (Baptist) therefore I am a Christian

Maybe we politicize it and say:

I am a Republican of course I am a Christian
or; I am a Democrat of course I am a Christian
Or even still; I am an American and America is a Christian nation, so I am a Christian.

Any of those applications of the term Christian if applied to this passage of scripture would then be able back into the statement “Since I am a Christian and [Acts 11:26](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac11.26) says Disciples are called Christians, then I am a Disciple”

None of those things make one a Christian, only the saving work of Christ on the cross and our confession of Him as Lord makes us a Christian [Romans 10:9–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Ro10.9-10) “9 that if you **confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved**. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

So if we understand that:

1. Not everyone called Disciple in Scripture is a Disciple of Jesus in the deeper understanding of the word Disciple; And

2. Not everyone whom claims to be a “Christian” is a Disciple of Jesus; And

3. Not everyone who is a “believer” is a Disciple of Jesus.

Then what does it mean to BE a Disciple of Jesus? Is there some form of Litmus test that can be applied to our understanding of a Disciple of Jesus. How do we answer the question: “AM I A Disciple of Jesus”

Lets start right here were we are in [John 8:30-32](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.30-32): “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then **Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed**. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

The first qualifier Jesus puts on being a disciple of His is that you **abide in His word: Abide: μένω (menō)** remain, stay (i.e., lodge) with. Broader meaning refers to dwelling, living, or lodging. In the natural sense when this word is used it means that the person who “dwells” with another receives from that other their needs of hospitality. All the needs of the one who abides are met by the one with whom they abide: Food, protection and shelter. **This idea also imply’s respectful submission to the authority of the house and obedience to the instruction of the one with whom you are dwelling**. This type of understanding transfers itself here to the spiritual understanding Jesus is laying out for His Disciples: Dwell within my word, receive from them all your needs submit to and obey all of them.

In our passage today that Janelle read at the beginning of the service Jesus uses this word Abide, μένω (menō), in a very familiar passage over in the Gospel of [John 15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn15): “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; **so you will be My disciples**. “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Jesus uses this word “Abide” μένω (menō) NINE times in the first 10 verses of [John 15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn15) and there are 3 distinct contexts:

• Abide in Christ (vs 4 & 7)

• His word Abiding in us (vs 7) (NOTE [John 8](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Jn8) Christ says **abide in His Word**, Here **the word abides in us**, these two are linked, His word will not abide in you if you do not abide in His word)

• Abiding in His Love (vs 9)

**Note Jesus closing of verse 8 “So you will be My disciples”**

We further see these characteristics of a disciple of Jesus and they flow out from Abiding:

1. Fruitfulness (vs 4 & 8) Fruitfulness in the simplest of terms means that the nature and character of a disciple become evident in your life and it flows from abiding in Christ, in His word and in His love!

2. Prayer and recognized answer to prayer (vs7 ) A disciple is marked by a life of prayer that flows from abiding in Christ, in His word, and in His love!

3. The Father is glorified in and through your life (vs 8) A disciple is marked by a life that glorifies God and that life flows from abiding in Christ, in His word, and in His love!

4. Obedience (vs 9) A disciple is marked by a life of obedience to God and that obedience flows from abiding in Christ, in His word, and in His love!

5. There will be Joy to the fullest in your life (vs 11) Worth noting here is that while the word translated here in vs 11 is “Remain” in the Greek it is the same work as Abide: μένω (menō) so **Christ Joy is what abides in the Disciple and makes their joy full**.

This Abiding is crucial because without it you cannot be His Disciple!

What do we do in 2024 to help us become disciples of Jesus?

1. We must get into the Word of God and Abide in it. 2024 for Corinth Baptist Church will be a year marked by our abiding in the word of God. How will we do that?

a. Sunday School - Get up and come to Sunday School, where we dig into the word of God and study it out

b. Wednesday night Bible Study

c. Sunday Night Bible Study

d. NEW: Tuesday Night Small Group Bible Study, At Pastor Carl and Liela’s House. 7 PM. Starting January 2nd at 7 PM. We will have Worship, Prayer, Bible Study and Fellowship. the first 12 weeks we will be studying a 12 Christian Beliefs You should know.

e. Daily Bible Reading - Bible Reading Plans are in the foyer.

The 2024 Vision for Corinth Baptist Church is we would truly become “People of the Book” and we would learn to “Abide in the Word and have the Word abide in us”

**The Relationship of Believers to Christ (John 15:1–11)**

