

Marks of a Disciple
November 3rd, 2024

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Intro:

How do you identify?

- A question that has been derailed given our culture
- At the heart of it, who are you? What makes you, you?

Your faith is the most important thing about you – that you are a Christian, a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What makes you a follower of Christ? Is it a simple profession of belief?

James 2:18-20

“But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?”

- Even the demons believe!

So, is it by what we do?

Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

- Many will say they have done great things for God, but Christ does not know them!

So, what is it to be a follower of Christ?

Look no further than Christ’s own words.

Matthew 16:24 - Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me

Why: We do as Christ does.

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Point 1: Deny yourself

What do you think of when someone says to deny yourself?

Humility, love, and dependence.

Humility:

Philippians 2:1-8

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Christ humbled himself despite His rightful glory and majesty – so who are we with nothing to hold ourselves above others?

Denying yourself is not only dealing with the issue of sinful pride, but it is important because Christ cherishes all and loves all – so by lacking humility, I make it as if Christ must place His focus on me and does wrong by me in valuing others.

Are we to make light of His work? By no means!

Love:

1 John 4:7-12

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.”

God shows His love through the sacrifice of His son, so what are we to withhold from others?

Dependence

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

I am not my own.

Highfield: We cannot love freely, because we do not own ourselves. But God loves us freely. Thus, we can love others freely because God freely loves us.

Bonhoeffer: Life together – chapter 1 – Community

Emotional love vs. Spiritual love

- Emotional love: Love from oneself and one's own image.
- Spiritual love: Love from union with Christ.

Example based on James 2:16:

Imagine you walk out of a McDonalds, have a happy meal in your hand, and are walking to your car. A man stumbles up to you, covered in dirt and visibly weak, and asks if you could spare him that meal as he hasn't eaten for several days. Overwhelmed with a sense of compassion, you say "I cannot sir, but what I can do is say: Go in peace, be warmed and filled." And with that, you continue on your way.

Let me ask you, is that really compassion?

James 2:15-17 - If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

I look at the man with a heart of compassion and wish him well – genuinely! But what would Christ's heart be?

Luke 12:33-34

"Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Mark 10 – The rich young ruler

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Let alone - Matthew 25:41-45

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying,

‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

Good intentions are not sufficient on their own, they must lead to action.

Emotional love remains in good intentions, Spiritual love seeks the completion of the need, the fulfillment of the need.

There is a distinction between the love that comes from my own heart and from Christ's. For this reason, Bonhoeffer himself uses 1 Corinthians 3:13

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Point 2: Take up your cross

Cross = Represents death and humiliation

It's hard for us to be told that we are bad, but when compared to Christ, what other conclusion is there?

To identify with the criminal is to identify with Christ. For Christ took on flesh so that he could bear our punishment, thus we must also recognize our status, and our diminution such that Christ is elevated all the more.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Why can we be declared righteous? Of our own work? By no means! For Christ becomes sin for us, where he becomes treated as a criminal. But in this, He acted justly and right in accordance to who He was.

So likewise, as we being sinners admit to ourselves that is who we are, we can then live in accordance with Christ as our role model through the work of the Spirit. We can bear good fruit even while we have not yet been glorified as we depend on God to sustain us.

We do as Christ does.

Matthew 16:25

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Romans 6:5-11

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the

death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Point 3: Follow Him

Uphold Christ’s teaching and bear much fruit

John 8:31-32

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Abide in the Word of Christ

John 15:8

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Bear much fruit as a witness of the transformation of Christ