

Converts vs. Disciples

- * Has the American Culture of convenience and consumerism changed the Gospel we hold dear?
- * Have we made the Gospel of Christ so palatable that it causes us to create anemic Christians instead of true followers of Christ?
- * Has our message to our world, “just believe and be saved” caused people to follow a concept, rather than follow Christ?
- * Jesus never told us to “win converts;” rather, He said to “make disciples!”

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLV)

18 Jesus came and said to them, “All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go and make followers of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach them to do all the things I have told you. And I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

- * The original word for “disciple” means:
 - helping someone to progressively learn the Word of God to become a mature believer
 - a learner; to train and develop in the truths of Scripture and the lifestyle required
 - helping a believer learn to be a disciple of Christ in belief and practice

I. So, what is the true, real and complete message of The Gospel?

A. First, let’s at least admit that we have lowered expectations and “watered down” the message of Jesus Christ!!

1. By doing so we have created a faith that is weak and meaningless!

2. We have created people of faith that are Christians in name only and NOT FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST!

B. The message of Jesus was much more than “just believe” in a system of doctrine.

1. The message of Jesus was, “Come, forsake your life and die!”

Matthew 10:37-39 (NIV)

37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

2. Not once, but twice Jesus makes these “ridiculous” statements:

Matthew 16:24-25 (NIV)

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

C. Well, Jesus was just a “radical Messiah” speaking poetically!
What did the Apostle Paul say about us living our faith?

1. Paul gives “radical instruction” to the Early Church about this new Christian Faith!

Romans 12:1-2 (TPT)

12 Beloved friends, what should be our proper response to God’s marvelous mercies? I encourage you to surrender yourselves to God to be his sacred, living sacrifices. And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights his heart. For this becomes your genuine expression of worship. 2 Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God’s will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.

2. Paul explains it this way:

Romans 6:10-11 (TPT)

10 For by his sacrifice he died to sin’s power once and for all, but he now lives continuously for the Father’s pleasure. 11 So let it be the same way with you! Since you are now joined with him, you must continually view yourselves as dead and unresponsive to sin’s appeal while living daily for God’s pleasure in union with Jesus, the Anointed One.

3. The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazi’s in 1945, said:
“When Christ calls man, he bids him come and die!”

II. The “Consumerism Christianity” that so many are served today has caused many who would follow Jesus Christ to be...

WEAK, SELF CENTERED AND WORLDLY CONVERTS!

- A. When we “sell people” on a Jesus who is easy to follow we unknowingly create “customers” instead of disciples!
1. These “customers” will continue to “shop” at our outlets as long as we have the “product” they desire!
 2. When their “shopping experience” is less than fulfilling they look to give their resources of time, energy and money to other outlets of life.
 3. This may be seen in “nomadic Christians” who travel between places of fellowship.
 4. This may appear in life as “disengaged people” who express their belonging to people and places but are AWOL in life.
 5. Please don’t hear this a “judgmental or legalistic”! It is merely a detachment from what a disciple of Christ is all about!!
- B. Is my attitude and thoughts of how I practice my faith about:
1. Having my way
 2. My preferences
 3. My desires
 4.and if I don’t get my way, I’ll take my business elsewhere!
- C. We are all guilty of putting other things ahead of Jesus!
1. Whether it’s wealth, comfort, causes, dreams, hobbies, interests or other things....my relationship with Jesus means everything!!!

Colossians 1:15-19 (NIV)

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

2. Throughout the letters of Paul we see the ultimate priority of life...The Person of Christ!

1 Corinthians 8:6 (NIV)

6 For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

3. Is Christ “a part” of your life or “is He your life?”

Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV)

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

III. Are we CONVERTS or are we DISCIPLES?

A. It is not God’s intention for us to come to Jesus and stand on the sidelines and root for Him!

1. He is not looking for cheerleaders, He is looking for men and women who will follow Him at all cost!
2. He is looking for radical devotion, total commitment and undivided devotion.
3. In short, He is looking for disciples. Those who will reproduce themselves in others!

2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

B. Converts verses Disciples:

1. Converts are believers who live in the world. Disciples are believers who live like Jesus.
2. Converts are focused on values, interests, worries, fears, priorities and lifestyles. Disciples are focused on Jesus.
3. Converts go to church. Disciples ARE the church.
4. Converts are involved in the mission of Jesus. Disciples are deeply committed to it.
5. Converts hear the Word of God. Disciples live it.
6. Converts follow the rules. Disciples follow Jesus.
7. Converts are all about believing. Disciples are all about being.

8. Converts are comfortable. Disciples make sacrifices.
9. Converts talk a good message. Disciples make other disciples.
10. A disciple gets his/her entire identity, purpose and meaning in Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 1:15-19 (NLT)

15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, 16 I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. 19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power.