



Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Discipleship On Stilts

How to walk tall after being born short

By Dr. John P. Splinter

Have you ever noticed that religious people tend to use the word “disciple,” a lot. Did you ever ponder what the word means? Is a disciple someone who’s brainlessly religious? Perhaps it’s an academic type who reads a lot of Christian books ~ or maybe some rich guy who does a lot for charities. Some religious types talk about “discipling” someone, sort of in the same way one would talk about grooming a horse. What’s that about? And have you ever noticed that some of the guys who talk most about discipleship, seem to be least likely to ever be picked by a jury of his peers, as being one? This article will explore, sometimes playfully, a few criteria for identifying a man as a genuine bonafide dee-ciple of Jesus Christ. The article will also chew for a while on the impact of male sexuality upon being a disciple.

Faulty Criteria

Let’s start with three contestants. As you evaluate these three dudes, put an “x” beside as many traits as you believe are factually representative of a true follower of Jesus Christ. It’s OK to put an “x” into every box – *or no boxes.*

Contestant #1: Billy Bob Buehler

	Hasn’t missed going to church every week since October, 1953
	Never uses four-letter cuss words
	Likes hymns and choirs a lot
	Knows how to pray real long, and out loud
	Has read through the Bible seven or eight times
	Is suspicious about playing cards
	Was “born again” at four years of age
	Never goes shopping on Sunday
	Thinks sinners exist for him to convert
	Doesn’t smoke
	For darn (oops) sure doesn’t drink
	Doesn’t watch R movies ~ suspicious of PG-13 movies
	Has memorized 178 Bible verses

Billy Bob wears a crew-cut. He's a hunter, an NRA member, and owns a lot of guns. He owns one of the world's biggest Bibles, which he carries on the front seat of his pickup. He suspects that anyone who doesn't go to church at least 51 Sundays per year is hell-bound.

Contestant #2: Jacque Taylor Guiterez-Anderson

Carries "Pro Life" signs in front of abortion clinics
Marches each year in the "Save The Gay Whales For Jesus" parade
Gives a lot of money to charity
Is anti-death-penalty
Is anti stem-cell and cloning research, but not sure why
Thinks sinners exist for him to pity
Doesn't own any guns
Was baptized at age 2 weeks
Considers himself an "independent" voter but usually votes left
Drives a used Honda hybrid with 179,000 miles
Wears a Che Guevara t-shirt ~ says it "to spark conversations"
Has been a "missionary to Africa" –a week w/ his church building a school in Zaire

Goes by "JT." Wears Birkenstocks and gives away so much of his personal income to charitable causes that he lives in near poverty. Suspects that 99.9% of church-goers are "faux Christians."

Contestant #3: Lehrner von Kirk

Has maintained a 4.0 grade point average since sixth grade
Read through <i>Calvin's Institutes</i> , in German, by age 14.
Always knew he wanted to be a pastor.
Graduated with his Masters in Divinity at age 22.
Went on for a Ph.D. in Sanscrit.
Got a second Ph.D. in Picking Theological Fly Droppings Out Of Pepper.
Is fluent in all biblical languages, plus German, Spanish, Mandarin and Swahili.
Has a personal library of 73,000 books, most on religious subjects.
Memorized the Old Testament, in Hebrew.
Published a seven-volume treatise on the first four words of Genesis 1.
Reads theological journals from the mid-1800s for fun.
Favorite book: <i>Twenty-Five Definitions of "Yom"</i> (Hebrew word for "day")

Lehrner knows the Bible better than the Angel Gabriel does. He has read hundreds of books from every nuanced religious perspective known to man. He actually solved the Reformed/Arminian conundrum. He looks down his nose at people who call themselves Christian, yet who can't exegete the Greek New Testament.

We decided not to create a separate "contestant" for this next person. He's a homophobic, misogynistic, ultra right-wing, war-mongering, racially intolerant, gun happy, jingoistic, free-

market entrepreneurial, Bible thumper. We only put this example in the mix because that's how so many think about Christians today. So is this guy a disciple?

OK, we've had some fun at the expense of would-be "disciples." How many "x's" did you give? Did these examples help you determine what a disciple is? Probably not. That's why we titled the first section of this booklet, "Faulty Criteria." Actually, while some of the criteria may describe some traits of some disciples, *none* of the criteria listed above necessarily has *anything* to do with a person being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So let's begin by asking, How would *you* describe a disciple of Jesus? Are *you* a disciple or just a tire-kicker? Does the thought of being a disciple of Jesus intrigue you, scare you, bore you, or turn you off?

In the rest of this article we're going to present four over-riding thoughts from scripture. We begin by pointing out that the decision to be a disciple of Jesus is first and foremost an *internal* function. It begins in the soul. Soon thereafter, however, *external* traits begin to show themselves. What we'll be looking at in this booklet are four of those external traits – traits that become so obvious that onlookers literally can't miss them. There may be other traits as well, but if these four traits are missing in a person's life, there's legitimate cause to question whether they're a disciple, or someone who just borrows the name.

Disciples Are Transformed ~ All The Rest Are Theoretical

The word, "transformed," comes from the Apostle Paul's statement in **Romans 12:1-2:** *I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV).*

Whatever else this means, at the very least it means that *something* is different in Christians. The believer has somehow changed from A to B. Unfortunately, the most common definition of this change often goes something like this. "When I was a kid I believed that only two angels could dance on the head of a pin. Because I attended XYZ church in ABC denomination, I now know that 12 angels can actually dance on the head of a pin."

That is to say, many people who call themselves Christian, do so because of a belief system that they have come to endorse. It might be Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, or Assemblies of God. It might be Reformed or Arminian. Its governmental style may be congregational, episcopal, or elder led. But if you ask many people why they call themselves Christians, they will in some way link their faith to a systematic theology of some sort. They might say, "I grew up Catholic," or "I grew up Baptist," or, "I grew up Methodist but then became a Lutheran." Or, they may not have had any faith history in their childhood, but now they're a Presbyterian, or whatever. In their minds, they are Christians because they hold the right theories ~ so we call them "theoretical" Christians.

This is as contrasted with "transformed people."