

## LESSON 15

# Foundations Curriculum

## The Five Characteristics of a Disciple

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### Introduction

#### The Five Characteristics of a Disciple

In this fifteenth lesson, we will examine in the light of the Scriptures what characteristics a disciple of Jesus must manifest in his practical life. After all, we have seen over the years how the Gospel has been adapted to human needs, and how this has produced a mistaken understanding of the Kingdom of God and of eternity. This is dangerous. It is very important that we fix our eyes and ears on what the Owner of the Kingdom (Jesus) said.

### 1) Who Are the People Who Will Inherit the Eternal Kingdom?

***It is foolishness to think that the Lord will change the conditions of His kingdom to adapt it to any one of us***

Jesus already came into the world, already became man, and died on the cross in our place. From that point on, He brought specific conditions for everyone who wants to enter His kingdom. Those who will participate in the Eternal Kingdom of God are those who submit to the conditions that Jesus established very clearly in the Holy Scriptures — they are those who do the will of the Father who is in heaven, as stated in Matthew 7:21.

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*

**Matthew 7:21 (NKJV)**

These are the true disciples of Jesus!

The disciples of Jesus are not those who declare themselves disciples, or those who address one another as disciples, brothers, or greet each other with “peace.” Disciples are those who do the will of God and fulfill the conditions that Jesus established for those who want to follow Him!

## 2) How to Identify (and Evaluate Yourself) as a True Disciple of Jesus

*Let us look at five characteristics that must be seen publicly:*

### 1) Loves Christ More Than All

*“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”*

**Luke 14:26 (NKJV)**

How can we express this love for the Lord?

#### 01 An intense relationship with Christ

**Ask yourself:**

- 1) How much time do I dedicate to my personal relationship with Christ?
- 2) Can my love for Him be measured by this devotion?
- 3) If I have no delight in being alone with Him here on earth, how will I endure an eternity in His presence?

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

*This does not mean we must spend the entire day in “devotional” time — we are not monks or nuns in a monastery. We have many family, household, school, professional, and social activities. But we must set apart quality time to be alone with Jesus as part of this life here on earth. This relationship is our fuel for life.*

Ask yourself: do I know the words of Christ, what He said, what He thinks?

More than servants, the Lord calls us to a personal relationship with Him. Do not limit yourself to serving and obeying Him. Enjoy fellowship with Him.

*“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”*

**John 15:15 (NKJV)**

#### 02 An enormous gratitude to Him, expressed in a life of contentment and thanksgiving

To our shame, it is astonishing how many Christians do not demonstrate this. They live complaining about everything, just as unbelievers do. Contentment and thanksgiving cannot depend on the circumstances that surround us.

#### 03 A willingness to serve Him with sacrifice and to give one’s life for Him

*“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”*

**Mark 8:35 (NKJV)**

No deceit was ever found in the mouth of Jesus. And these words were spoken by Him. The way to preserve our life is by losing it for His sake and the Gospel’s.

#### **04 Obedience to His commandments**

*“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.  
And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him  
and manifest Myself to him.”*

**John 14:21 (NKJV)**

#### **Ask yourself:**

- 1) Which commandments of the Lord do I know and do not obey? Make a list.
- 2) If my love for the Lord is measured by my obedience, can I say in good conscience that I love Him?

#### **05 Carrying out His work!**

*“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me,  
and to finish His work.’”*

**John 4:34 (NKJV)**

What a great honor to cooperate with the Lord in His effort to establish His Kingdom on the earth and to have a family of sons conformed to Jesus! Doing the will of the Father was compared to a basic necessity: eating.

Many brothers and sisters in our day avoid basic things such as being with the Church, making a visit, or helping people. Jesus, on the other hand, had the work as His main sustenance.

#### **Ask yourself:**

What is my willingness to carry out the work of the Lord?

One day we will meet in heaven our brothers and sisters who, throughout the earth, have been persecuted, tortured, who lost their children, parents, spouses, and even their own lives. I do not want to have loved myself and my own life more than Christ. Mercy!

#### **2) Forsakes All That He Has**

*“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has  
cannot be My disciple.”*

**Luke 14:33 (NKJV)**

This is not rhetoric, a “figure of speech” by Jesus, or something subjective — it is a concrete demand. Being aware that it is necessary and indispensable to love less father, mother, brothers and sisters, children, husband and wife, and even your own life, now consider everything you possess.

“Place yourself” in the midst of that multitude that was hearing these words of Jesus and ask yourself with complete sincerity:

- 1) Am I willing to forsake everything?
- 2) When persecution comes and my possessions are “plundered,” will I have joy in losing everything?
- 3) Is there anything on this earth that I have not yet forsaken? Dreams, house, possessions, job, career, preferences, leisure, habits, etc.?

*“For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.”*

**Hebrews 10:34 (NKJV)**

**Note:**

*Jim Elliot, a Protestant Christian who was killed while trying to evangelize a people in Ecuador, was criticized for giving up many of his possessions in the 1950s in order to devote himself to an evangelistic mission. His famous words: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose!”*

### **3) Practices the Word of Christ**

*“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him,  
‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’”*

**John 8:31 (NKJV)**

**Observe:**

What is the main difference between a disciple and a religious Christian?

A disciple practices the Word of God. A religious person is a mere hearer and sometimes teaches others but does not live what he preaches or teaches.

A disciple allows himself to be measured, examined, and corrected by the Word of Christ. He is transformed by the Word. Each year he advances toward Jesus and is sanctified by the “washing of water” of the Word. A disciple cannot be content to continue with the same errors and sins year after year.

**Let us look at some practical situations and evaluate yourself:**

→ Husbands: overcome selfishness and anger and love your wives; do not treat them with bitterness; be gentle and caring. Serve your wives. Let them see that you are willing to die for them. Do not accept the label of being harsh or domineering.

→ Wives: be submissive to your husbands; do not be complainers (quarrelsome), but joyful, gentle, and wise. Let your husbands feel like a king in their home.

→ Parents: do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. Prioritize them, instruct them, dedicate quality time to them; discipline them and do not hold back on kisses and hugs.

→ Children: obey and honor your parents. Make them feel important and valued. Obey in all things, promptly, even in what you do not like; do not grumble and do not despise them in the depths of your heart.

#### **4) Loves the Brothers and Sisters as Jesus Loved**

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

**John 13:34–35 (NKJV)**

In the words of the Lord Himself, this is the second most important commandment:

*“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

**Mark 12:30–31 (NKJV)**

How should we love the brothers and sisters? With the highest standard: as Jesus did.

How did Jesus love? By giving His life.

#### **The chief characteristic of a disciple is love!**

*“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

**Galatians 5:14 (NKJV)**

#### **PAY ATTENTION:**

*Worldly things we cannot allow in the Church. These are gross sins: slander — speaking evil of another: the slanderers will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9–10); brothers and sisters who speak evil of one another (James 4:11). NOTE: If someone wants to speak evil of another brother or sister to you, say: I do not want to hear it. Go speak with*

*them! Intrigue, factions, preferences: “I don’t like so-and-so,” “I think so-and-so is arrogant.” All of this is the flesh. This has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Touchiness and grudges: being easily offended. A disciple does not remain offended, even if he has been wronged. What should you do if there is a “cause for complaint”? Forgive! (Colossians 3:13).*

### **How should this love be?**

Sincere love for one another, without hypocrisy (1 Peter 4:8).

NOTE: When there is a complaint, go resolve it quickly and do not wait for the other person to come to you.

Affection, care — especially for newcomers and for those who are weaker in the faith. Everyone must be attentive. We cannot have anyone alone, without attention. Whoever comes to us must be impacted by the love among the brothers and sisters and by the atmosphere of family.

### **5) Bears Much Fruit**

*“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.”*

**John 15:5–8 (NKJV)**

Think about this: everything that has life grows and multiplies!

What is the fruit that Jesus expects us to produce in order to be recognized as His disciples?

The “fruit of the Spirit” — that is, what is produced and manifested in our own lives by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us — the fruit that the disciples, the branches of the vine, must produce.

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

**Galatians 5:22–23 (NKJV)**

The fruit described in Galatians 5:22–23 is what the Spirit produces.

In the text of John 15:8, Jesus speaks of a condition we must fulfill in order to be considered His disciples. He points to what we must do and produce.

### **Another example:**

The “fruit of the disciple” and the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30): The talents did not belong to the servants — they were given by the Lord so that they might multiply them. It was an investment that required a return. Those who applied themselves to the responsibility they received were commended. The negligent one was severely punished.

### **Applying**

The life we have is not our own — we received it from the Lord: we are the branches receiving life from the vine.

Just as the master in the parable of the talents, our Lord expects us not to be negligent and lazy, but diligent and committed to reproducing His life in other lives.

#### ***How can this bearing of fruit be demonstrated?***

By doing the same thing Jesus did.

→ Living for the complete pleasure of the Father, always doing what pleases Him, what makes Him glad; being salt of the earth, light of the world, and a city set on a hill; being such that our lives reflect Jesus. It is the same fruit.

→ Serving; loving; building up; helping; showing hospitality.

→ Preaching the Gospel and bringing many lives into the Kingdom of God.

It is worth noting that all the expressions of fruit listed above depend on this last one: preaching the Gospel and bringing many lives into the Kingdom of God.

Is it possible for someone who has received the life of Christ not to want to share that life with others? Is it possible for someone who has the Holy Spirit not to preach the Gospel? Is it possible for someone who is ashamed of preaching the Gospel to be considered a disciple of Jesus? He said that whoever is ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of that one when He comes in the glory of His Father! This is extremely serious!

#### **Every true disciple understands that he was called to bear fruit!**

### **Final Review:**

**01** God is preparing a people for Himself. A holy people. A people that expresses His glory. We belong to this people.

**02** We must not lower the standard of the preaching to reach people. We do not want to gather crowds. We want sincere disciples.

**03** Let us restore ancient landmarks. Fundamental principles. Fundamental characteristics that we want to embody.

**04** Jesus provided all the resources. We are the people God set free. He Himself lives in us to fulfill His will (1 John 4:9 and Galatians 2:20).

**05** Let us renew ourselves and run with perseverance and ever-greater diligence the race that is set before us.

*“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.”*

**1 John 4:9 (NKJV)**

*“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

**Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)**

Up to this point we have clearly understood that no one will have access to the benefits of the cross of Christ unless he takes up his own cross each day and follows Him to death!

## **CONCLUSION**

In this fifteenth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we listed five characteristics that define the practical life of a disciple of Jesus. The chief mark of a follower of Christ is love. Moreover, a true disciple of Jesus loves Christ more than everything and everyone, demonstrates enormous gratitude to Him with contentment and thanksgiving, and is willing to serve Him with sacrifice and to give his life for Him. A true Christian also obeys the commandments of Christ and demonstrates love for Him by carrying out His tremendous and glorious work — preaching the Gospel, multiplying the life of Christ in others.

In this lesson, we also proposed that each disciple evaluate himself in the light of the Scriptures and the characteristics mentioned, in order to adjust the course of his life if necessary — to be attentive and to demonstrate fear toward what Jesus taught, preached, and established as the standard of conduct for our lives.

## **CONSIDER CAREFULLY**

**01** Does my practical life demonstrate that I love Christ more than all?

**02** Have I forsaken and do I continue forsaking all that I have?

**03** Do I seek to know and practice the words of Christ?

**04** Do I strive to love the brothers and sisters as Jesus loved?

**05** Is it my way of life to manifest the fruit of the Spirit and to proclaim the Kingdom of God?

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,  
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

**Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)**

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