

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

A Sermon

by

A.W. Tozer

Messages from God's servants
in former days

*[The Lord] gave some to be ... pastors and teachers,
to prepare God's people for works of service,
so that the body of Christ may be built up.
--Ephesians 4:11-12*

*By faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.
--Hebrews 11:4*



The Teleios Ministry of
Camelback Bible Church
3900 East Stanford
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
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Teleios Sermon #80

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? It's a question that gives each one of us reason to pause, reflect and examine His call to "FOLLOW ME." It is also an ambition that all of us who love Him and call Him our Lord share and deeply desire.

We quickly discover that learning from our Master is unlike any body of instruction we have ever received. There are no options, no shortcuts, no electives, etc., but what joy there is in learning from a Teacher who loves us so much that He died that we might live. As He sought to please His Father in all He thought, said, and did, we now seek to please Him, enabled by His power and under His gentle hand, and so prove ourselves to be His disciples and glorify our Father in heaven.

A.W. Tozer speaks to us once again this month and provides insight in what it means to be "**True Disciples of Christ.**" The truth of who we are in Christ and His work in our lives never changes. What we believe (doctrine) will always be displayed in what we practice (conduct). Mr. Tozer states that if you want to see a true disciple of Christ follow him or her for seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day ... everywhere they go and observe what they say and do. I know I'm not ready for this challenge, but even saying that ... the desire to practice the presence of Jesus Christ gives me unbelievable joy.

Jesus states in John that "as the Father has sent Him, He now sends us." If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ you have been sent into this world to reflect His glory. To shine ever so brightly that all might know Him. Sent to seek the lost and sent to serve. As He went about doing good ... He now sends us ... or as Paul said, we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

In our travels this summer I pray for our safety and for our work (HIS WORK IN AND THROUGH US) as His ambassadors and that we also might say as Paul, "we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

Seeking to follow Christ with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Eaton, Sr.

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

A Sermon

by

A.W. Tozer

ARE YOU REALLY CHRIST'S DISCIPLE, or are you some other kind of disciple? To the people who had believed Him, Jesus said,

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32)

We can learn quite a bit from what is *not* said or written. For example, if I say “up,” I imply that there must be a “down.” If I say “long,” I imply also a “short,” or I would not have had to say “long.” If I say “good,” there must be a “bad,” else there would be nothing to compare “good” with. So when Jesus spoke of real disciples, there must have been other kinds as well.

Before we consider some of the other kinds of disciples, as compared with “real” disciples, notice the framework of Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees. First, they had asked Him, “Where is your father?” (8:19). And Jesus had dared to reply, “You do not know me or my Father....If you knew me, you would know my Father also” (8:19). Then He continued, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come” (8:21).

A bit later, they asked the impudent question, “Who are you?” (8:25). Jesus replied in effect, “I am the One I have been telling you I am. Did I not say, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days’? That is who I am! I referred to Myself and said, ‘The Son of Man is in heaven.’ That is who I am. I said, ‘I that speak to you am the Christ.’ I said, ‘The Son gives light to whom He will’—that is who I am.

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

“I said, ‘I am the bread of life who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ I said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.’ That also is who I am. I speak and I judge, and the Father is with me because I do always what pleases the Father. I am the Spokesperson from the Father. That is who I am!”

Jesus was God speaking

Do not fail to notice that Jesus could and did say, “I speak and I judge. I speak from the Father.” Jesus was not in the business of offering human advice that people could take or leave as they wished. Instead, He always spoke with absolute, final authority. He was not just a man speaking. His was not just advice from a good, religious man. He was God speaking.

This, then, was what Jesus told His questioners:

“I am from above....He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world....I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me.” (John 8:23, 26, 28-29)

Jesus was declaring that He spoke for the Father, from whose absolute message there was no appeal. This was quite different from what we hear about in ecclesiastical circles today. A bishop says, “It is to be like this....” However, his decree can always be appealed to the archbishop. But when the Lord Jesus Christ speaks, there is no appeal. It is either Jesus or everlasting night. It is either listen to what He says or be forever in ignorance. It is either take His light, or be forever in darkness.

Immediately someone is bound to protest. “What arrogance! What intolerance! I do not believe Christians should be intolerant!” Well, I can startle such a person a little more. I believe in Christian charity, but I do not believe at all in Christian tolerance. The person who hates the name of Jesus, who believes that He was not the Son of God but an imposter, deserves charity on our part. I think if I lived next door to such a person, I would not put a fence between us. If I worked with him or her, I would not refuse to be friendly. I believe in Christian charity, but I do not believe in

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

the weak tolerance that we hear preached so often now—the idea that Jesus must tolerate everyone and that the Christian must tolerate every kind of doctrine. I do not believe it for one minute, for there are not a dozen “rights.” There is only one “right.” There is but one Jesus and one God and one Bible.

When we become so tolerant that we lead people into mental fog and spiritual darkness, we are not acting like Christians. We are acting like cowards! We cannot do better than to remember that when Jesus Christ has spoken, that is it!

When Jesus claimed to have come from the heart of the Father, when He was declared to be the eternal Word who was in the beginning with God, who was and is God, we are hearing truth. Our position is clear. It is not Jesus plus a number of other philosophies. It is Jesus only. He is enough.

Christians are not the only “bigots”

We who are evangelicals and conservative in theology are often accused of being bigoted. I can only reply that science and philosophy are more arrogant and bigoted than religion could ever possibly be. I have never taken my Bible into the laboratory and tried to tell the scientist how to conduct his experiments. And I will thank him for not bringing his test tube into the holy place and trying to tell me how to conduct my business. The scientist has nothing that he can tell me about Jesus Christ, our Lord. There is nothing that he can add, and I do not need to appeal to him.

I have studied Plato and the other philosophers. I have never found that Plato added anything finally to what Jesus Christ said. Studying the philosophers may clarify my thinking and broaden my outlook, but it is not necessary to my salvation.

I can only say, let us be tolerant wherever we can be, and let us be charitable toward all those we cannot tolerate. But let us not imagine for a minute that we are called upon to take a top-of-the-fence stand, never knowing exactly what we believe.

An honest person may come to Jesus seeking, yet not understanding. It may take a week or a month, a year or ten years to help him or her understand. But that person can be sure of this: our Lord will never, never say anything but what He has said. Never will He hedge. Never will He put

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

in a footnote, “I didn’t quite mean it like that.” He said what He meant. He meant what He said. He is the eternal Word, and we must listen to Him if our discipleship is to be genuine and consistent.

We ought to think with joy about those who are true disciples of Jesus Christ. A true disciple has not taken an impulsive leap in the dark. That person is one who has become a Christian after deep thought and proper consideration. A true disciple has allowed the Word of God to search his or her heart. A true disciple has felt the sense of personal sin and the need to be released from it. A true disciple has come to believe that Jesus Christ is the only person who can release him or her from guilt. A true disciple has committed himself or herself without equivocation, without reservation to Jesus Christ the Savior.

A true disciple does not consider Christianity a part-time commitment. That person has become a Christian in all departments of his or her life. A true disciple has reached the point in Christian experience where there is no turning back. Follow him or her for 24 hours of the day and night. You will find you can count on that person’s faithfulness to Christ and his or her joyful abiding in the Word of God.

The other kinds of disciples

Now, what about the other kinds of disciples?

First, we must consider the person who becomes a disciple of Christ on impulse. This is likely to be the person who came in on a wave of enthusiasm, and I am a little bit suspicious of anyone who is too easily converted. I have a feeling that if he or she can be easily converted to Christ, he or she may be very easily flipped back the other way. I am concerned about the person who just yields, who has no sales resistance at all.

I like the sinner who means business, even though at first he or she may be standing up, looking you right in the eye, and saying, “I don’t believe it and I won’t do it!” The time will come when that person will think better of it. He or she will take time to cool off, will take time to listen to and meditate on the Word. Slowly but surely he or she will determine that the way of Christ is the right way. When that person becomes a Christian,

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

you have got somebody!

But the one who is a “flip-flopper,” easy to push around, will be easily pushed out again. If he or she can be reasoned into the kingdom, he or she can be scared out again in no time.

Some have become disciples because they found themselves in just the right frame of mind. Here is a man whose mother died recently. The invitation song is “Tell Mother I’ll Be There,” and he comes forward weeping. People think he is a penitent man, but in reality he is only thinking about his mother. Christianity on impulse is not the answer to discipleship. God will not stampede us into His kingdom. The Bible is true when it declares, “Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2), but God does not want people to be helped from their cocoons before they are ready.

Actually, I go along with the man or woman who is thoughtful enough about this decision to say truthfully: “I want a day to think this over,” or, “I want a week to read the Bible and to meditate on what this decision means.”

I have never considered it a very great compliment to the Christian church that we can generate enthusiasm on such short notice. The less there is in the kettle, the quicker it begins to boil. There are some who get converted on enthusiasm and backslide on principle!

Beware the cult of personality

I have also met the kind of disciples who seemed to be Christians because of the cult of personality. They had been overwhelmed and charmed by a big dose of winsome personality. You cannot deny that when some people flash their broad smiles, their faces radiate charm and people want to follow them immediately.

I have always been bothered a little by personality tests, even though I am addicted to them. Actually, I have never found one that really benefited me. I always seem to come out with a poor score. But I never pass one up if it asks, “Are you a good husband?” “Are you a good father?” “Have you got personality?”

I once confided to Dr. H. M. Shuman, long-time president of The Christian and Missionary Alliance and a very wise Christian philosopher, “Dr. Shuman, no one will follow me. I can’t help but notice all of the big

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

leaders with their charm and personality to spare. All they have to do is whistle, and there come the crowds!”

“Just thank God that they are *not* following you.” Dr. Shuman replied. “Although they may not follow you, preach Jesus and they will follow *Him!*”

When you think about it, we are told that Jesus Himself had no beauty that we should desire Him. He was not a personality boy. I think He must have been a plain-looking Jew, for Judas had to kiss Him to let the soldiers know which one He was. If Jesus had been a television personality and had looked the part, no one would have had to go up and spot Him.

But when Jesus opened His mouth, grace and truth came out, and men and women either rejected the words that fell from His lips or they followed Him. In either case, they could never be the same again.

The half-disciples

Now, think with me about those who are demi-disciples—that is, part disciples, half disciples. These are men and women who bring their lives partially under the control of Christ, but they leave whole other areas outside His control. Long ago I came to the conclusion that if Jesus Christ is not controlling all of me, the chances are very good that He is not controlling any of me.

It may sound strange, but I have met Christian disciples who were half saved. Please do not ask me to identify them theologically. I cannot. I am glad that God does not ask me to write letters of recommendation for some people whom He cannot place! He is not asking me that, for He knows where everyone is—in or out of the kingdom—and I do not.

I only know this about some of these people whom I see as half disciples: they will allow the Lord to bother them on some things, but certainly not on others. They will obey the Lord in select areas of their lives but disobey Him willfully in others. The result is I do not know where to put them. I do not know what to do with them. Therefore, I must leave them with God.

As for myself, I do not want to be a half disciple I want my whole life—all of me—under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was an old English preacher who used to say, “If Christ cannot be Lord of all, He will not be Lord at all!” Certainly, He wants to be Lord of all of my life. He

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

wants me to be a disciple who will allow Him to rule my entire being.

Suppose a young Christian man starts out with a shining face. He kneels at the prayer meeting and says, "Lord, take me and use me!" He seems to be an exemplary, consecrated Christian man. Then a beautiful girl comes along. She is not a Christian, but she is nice to look at and she has a winsome personality and a soft voice. The young man becomes interested in her, and she starts to lead him away. Eventually, there is a wedding, and they get their home set up, and soon the young man is among those who do not show up for prayer meeting. You ask him about it, and he replies, "Well, my wife had another plan for me." Before long, he is a part-Christian and part-husband, not working very hard at either one.

I do not want to be cruel, but I must be honest. Jesus Christ wants to be and must be Lord. He must be head of and lord of all departments of our lives. We cannot have a girlfriend or a husband or a home or a job shut up in an airtight compartment that Jesus cannot control. If Jesus is not Lord of all of us, we are not real disciples.

Then, there are the short-term disciples

Others are disciples—but only for the short term. I have met some of them. They always leave a way out. They never burn their bridges behind them. They never reach the point of no return. I believe a Christian is a Christian indeed, a real disciple, when he or she has reached the point of no return.

The people in our churches would not be worrying so much about whether they can or cannot be lost after they are saved if they would just come right down to business with God. They need to say, "Lord, I am not going to worry about such theological problems. I am going to face it now, and reach the point of no return. I will not be going back." But there still are short-term disciples who have not yet reached that point. They are part-time, short-term. They are seasonal disciples. They come to church on Easter Sunday, at Christmas and at other special times. They can be very religious in certain seasons.

Have you ever heard of "chameleon" disciples? They can change color with the environment. There are even some preachers like that. They can talk the language of the crowd they happen to be with. If they are with

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

liberal thinkers, behold, they begin to sound liberal. If they are with evangelicals, they sound evangelical. They are “adaptable,” they say, “We believe in adjustment.” They do not need adjustment; they need God!

As Christian disciples, we should be whatever we are wherever we are. Like diamonds. A diamond does not adjust; it is always a diamond. Just so, Christians ought always to be Christians. We are not Christians if we have to wait for the right atmosphere to practice our religion. We are not Christians if we have to go to church to be blessed. We are not Christians until we are thoroughly Christ’s—until we have reached the point of no return, not seasonal any more, but regular always. Then, the Lord says, we are real disciples. We are following on to know the Lord!

It may be well to look at some of the marks of those who are not really disciples. Some of them have a pious look. In fact, on Sunday mornings, they look as pious as stuffed owls. We have some of them in our evangelical circles. People can afford to be pious at 10:45 a.m. on Sundays. It is a most convenient hour. They do not have to be religious to get up in time for 10:45 a.m. church. They do not lose out on their Sunday dinners, either. They get a little fresh air. The service does not last long. The music is good most of the time. It only costs them the dollar they drop in the offering plate.

So, those who go to church only once a week—on Sunday morning—leave themselves wide open to the suspicion that they are only part-time, Sunday-morning disciples. They are not in church enough to prove that they are any other kind of disciple.

They have not given up their other loves

Another mark is this: they have not given up their other loves. Fenelon, many years ago, said “Give up thy loves in order that thou mightest find *the* love. Give up thy lovers that thou mightest find the great *Lover*. Give up all that thou lovest in order that thou mightest find the *One* whom thou canst love.” But these “other” disciples will not do that—they will not give up their other loves. They want to take the world in one hand and the cross in the other and walk the tightrope between heaven and hell. They hope by the grace of God to make one last final jump over the portals.

No, I think not. I remember Balaam in the Scriptures. He prayed a plaintive prayer, and on the strength of that prayer, half the preachers in this

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

country would have drummed him straight into heaven. He said,

Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my end be like theirs! (Numbers 23:10)

But then he went over to the side of the sinners and fought against the righteous in battle. When he died, what kind of death did he die? Did he die the death of the righteous? I say no. He died the death of the sinner because he had lived the life of a sinner. The person who wants to die the death of the righteous must live the life of the righteous. The person who wants to die a Christian must live a Christian. The person who wants the Advocate above to be a shelter for him or her in that hour must allow Him to be a shelter right now!

Still some other marks

Do you want to know another mark of the “other” disciples? Well, they will always be attracted to their own crowd. They will always go with their own company. In most churches there are some who claim to be disciples who have scarcely attended a prayer meeting a year. Some time ago Dr. William Pettengil spelled it out for us. he was preaching from the Acts, and he came to the passage, “On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people”(4:23). Dr Pettengil bore down rather hard on the fact that all of us human beings, if free to do so, generally gravitate to our own company. Let some people go, and they will soon be fishing with other fishermen. Let another group go, and before long they will be in a music hall listening to an opera. Let others go and you will soon find them sitting at the racetrack watching the horses. Christians flock together, too. Those who have a prayer meeting heart will be at the prayer meeting. If we have Christian hearts, we will be more than Sunday morning Christians.

There are also those who say, “I am a disciple of Christ,” but they flippantly ignore—or reject—many of His words and commandments.

Some teachers have tried to enshroud Jesus in a pink fog of sentimentality. But there is really no excuse for misunderstanding Him. He drew the line as taut as a violin string. He said, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Matthew 12:30).

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

“Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:18). “Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36). At that great day when He judges mankind, Jesus says He “will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” The one group “will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:32, 46). Those statements leave no twilight zone, no in-between.

Consider the benefits promised to the true disciples. Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” No one can know truth except the one who obeys truth. You think you know truth. People memorize the Scriptures by the yard, but that is not a guarantee of knowing the truth. Truth is not a text. Truth is in the text, but it takes the text plus the Holy Spirit to bring truth to a human soul. A person can memorize a text, but the truth must come from the Holy Spirit through the text. Faith comes by hearing the Word, but faith is also the gift of God by the Holy Spirit.

Truth requires inward illumination

Truth must be understood by inward illumination. Then we know the truth. Until that time, we do not know it. That is why Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching”—that is, if you continue in My teachings—“you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

I heard through missionaries of a boy overseas who had memorized Jesus’ entire Sermon on the Mount. He did it in such record time and with such apparently little effort that someone called him in to find out how he had done it.

“Well,” said the boy, “I would memorize a verse and then trust God to help me put it into practice. Then I would memorize the next verse and say, ‘Lord, help me to live this one, too.’” The boy said that in that fashion he had memorized the entire Sermon on the Mount.

That boy had truth on his side. He did not consider truth to be something objective, simply to be filed in the mind as knowledge. Rather, truth to him was also subjective—to be acted on. Truth becomes real to us

TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

within our beings by obedience and faith.

Charles G. Finney taught that it was wrong—morally wrong—to teach objective doctrine without a moral application. I have gone to Bible classes and listened to men who were learned in the Word of God. Still I have come away as cold as a pickled fish. There was no help, no lift in my spirit, nothing to warm the inside of my heart. The truth had been given to me just like a proposition in Euclid or a mathematical formula from Pythagoras. And the answer is, “So what? Let’s go and have a soda!” Are we aware that we can give people objective truth without moral application? If God’s moral Word is true, it means us. And if it means us, we ought to obey it. That is life. That is knowing the truth.

And the other benefits?

Not only can we know truth, but the truth makes us free. How we long for that benefit! There is a doxology to Jesus in the Revelation that reads like this:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (Revelation 1:5-7)

If you are familiar with the King James Version, you may remember that it reads “Unto him that...*washed* us from our sins...” The Greek verb allows either meaning. What does a laundry do with our clothes? Our contacts with civilization make our clothes dirty, greasy, sometimes spotted. The dirt is not only on our clothes; soon it is actually *in* them. We can shake the garment, argue with it, talk to it, read Shakespeare to it, lecture it on patriotism or the advances of civilization. Still it is soiled and dirty. The dirt must be loosed. The garment must be set free from its soil.

At the laundry the garment is immersed in a solution that looses the dirt. Then it is rinsed, dried, pressed and sent back to its wearer, clean and presentable. But it had to undergo a process that would free it from the dirt.

The only solution that will loose us from our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ. He loved us and freed us—washed us—from our sins in His own

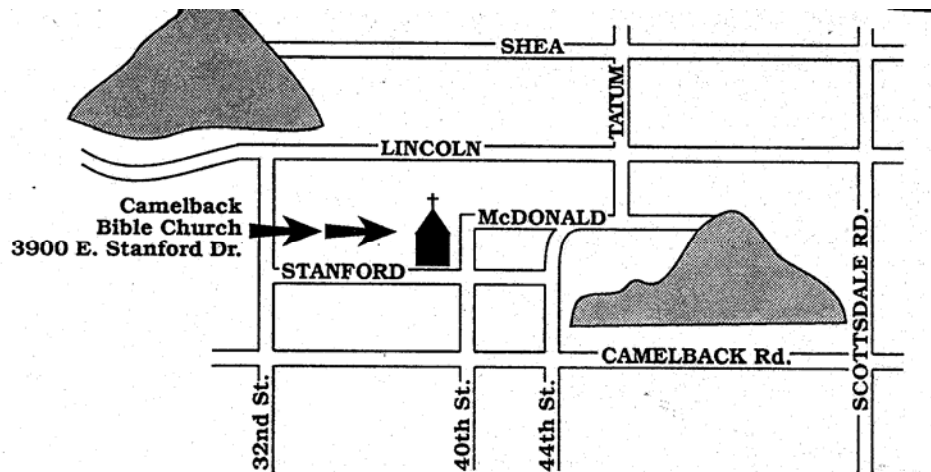
TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

blood. Education, refinement—nothing else worked. But when Jesus' blood did its work, we were free!

“You will know the truth,” Jesus said, “and the truth will set you free.” The truth will lead you to the cross, to the Lamb, to the fountain filled with blood, and you will be free from your sins. But there must be a moral commitment. If there is not, there is no understanding. If there is no understanding, there is no cleansing.

Are you obeying the truth as it is revealed by the Spirit of God? Are you enjoying the benefits of freedom in Jesus Christ? Are you one of His *true* disciples?

Date I Finished Reading This Sermon: _____



Camelback Bible Church

3900 East Stanford Drive
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Telephone (602) 955-6370

Sunday School Classes for all ages – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship – 10:30 a.m.

Sunday Evening Worship – 6:00 p.m.

*We proclaim Him,
admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom,
that we may present everyone complete in Christ.*

--- Colossians 1:28