

Distinct Disciples

By Bubba Garner

It is amazing to me how people in the world will sometimes use the name of Jesus to justify their behavior. They choose an immoral lifestyle and then cry, "Jesus never judged people" to anyone who might oppose them. They have a picture in their mind of a soft, cuddly Savior who never said anything controversial and tried to keep the peace at all costs.

But that is not the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus is a Lord who discriminates. Of course, He never did so in an unjust or prejudicial way—based on skin color, social standing, or gender. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). But Jesus did discriminate in the purest sense of the word: "to make or draw a distinction." In certain instances, He made a separation. He drew a line.

When great multitudes flocked to Him, Jesus made certain they understood what was required of them. He was not interested in mere followers. He wanted disciples. Three times in Luke 14, the Lord boldly announced that a certain kind of person "cannot be My disciple." That is an absolute. He did not say they "may not" or "should not" but "cannot." He clearly made a distinction.

Who, then, can be Jesus' disciple? Where does the Lord draw the line?

Those who choose Him as their first love. "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). This is not a literal hatred of your family. Jesus quoted from the Law of Moses when He said to "honor your father and your mother" (Matt. 15:4); no hatred there. When you put this passage alongside Matthew 10:37, "he who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me," it is obvious that it is a comparative love. Jesus does not want second place. He wants to be your first love. This is a choice that the Lord demands. Jesus said to the church at Ephesus, "I have this against you that you have left your first love" (Revelation 2:4). The word "first" means "best" or "superior to all compared." You must choose a master (Matthew 6:24). You can only have one first love. If not, you cannot be His disciple.

Those who choose death as a way of life. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). Jesus carried His cross to His execution. He calls for the same commitment from those who follow Him. Some followed Him to a literal martyr's death, but everyone who wishes to come after Him must die to his own personal desires, to self. It is no longer "I" who lives, but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20). In Luke 9:23, Jesus said that we must take up our crosses "daily" and follow Him. This is not a one-time decision. It is a way of life.

And notice, each must carry "his own" cross. We can bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). But you have to carry your own cross. No one can choose to crucify your

flesh for you. Only you can decide to live and die for Him. Otherwise, you cannot be His disciple.

Those who choose to finish what they start. "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33). The word translated "give up" literally means "say goodbye to." It is a decision to cut yourself off from anything that would keep you from finishing the race set before you. A disciple is not one who starts and then quits. It's one who serves His master all the way to the end.

Sadly, this is where the Lord loses a lot of people. They don't "say goodbye" to their former life. They leave it around just close enough that they become entangled in it all over again. We must recognize this as unacceptable. "God calling yet! I cannot stay; my heart I yield without delay. Vain world, farewell! from thee I part; the voice of God has reached my heart" (J. Borthwick). Heed His pleading voice, or you cannot be His disciple.

There is coming a day in which there will be another division. A line will be drawn, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Which side will you be on? With Jesus and His disciples? The choice is yours.

The *KSR Sower*, December 21, 2014
[Originally published in *Biblical Insights*, April, 2012]

Will the promise of the reward overcome the allure of the temporary pleasure?

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." Hebrews 11:24-26