
Just What Is a Disciple?: 12 Characteristics from Matthew's Gospel

The Biblical Words for "Disciple"

NOUNS

μαθητής – *mathētēs* (mah-thay-TAYS) – a disciple
[used only in the Gospels & Acts, 261 times] AND

μαθήτρια – *mathētria* (mah-THAY-tree-uh) a female disciple
[used only once – Acts 9:36]

VERBS

μαθητεύω – *mathēteuo* (mah-thay-TOO-oh) (1) intransitively, active *be or become a disciple of someone; be instructed, be trained*; (2) transitively *make a disciple of someone, instruct, cause someone to become a follower.* *[used 4x: Mt 13:52; 27:57; 28:19; Acts 14:21]*

μανθάνω – *manthano* (mahn-THA-noh) from a basic meaning *learn*, i.e. of directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect; (1) as learning through instruction *be taught, learn* from someone; (2) as learning through inquiry *ascertain, discover, find out*; (3) as learning through practice or experience *come to know, come to realize*; (4) as achieving comprehension *understand, learn* *[24x in NT]*

12 Characteristics of a Disciple (from Matthew's Gospel)

1. A Disciple Is a BELIEVER

12:49-50 ⁴⁹ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

2 Thes 1:8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. A Disciple Is an IDENTIFIER

28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

3. A Disciple Is a FOLLOWER

8:23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

4. A Disciple Is an OBSERVER

15:12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

5. A Disciple Is a LISTENER

9:37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. (19:23)

6. A Disciple Is an INQUIRER

13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

17:10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (17:19; 18:1; 19:25; 21:20; 24:3; 26:8)

7. A Disciple Is a LEARNER

10:24 A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master.

11:29 Take My yoke upon you and **learn** from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. (26:26)

8. A Disciple Is a REJECTOR

15:2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

9. A Disciple Is an OBEYER

21:6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. (26:19)

28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

10. A Disciple Is an IMITATOR

10:25a It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.

11. A Disciple Is a SUFFERER

10:25-26 ²⁵ It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they call* those of his household! ²⁶ Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

12. A Disciple Is a SERVER

14:19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.