

Discipleship

A disciple is a follower or learner. Lots has been written on this subject: this is my perspective -

Background:

We hear a lot and see a lot! We think and reflect, we experiment, we decide. As we grow we learn by example, watching, listening, trying for ourselves. With formal education, words try to express so much of who we are but we have a lot of freedom to decide what we are and how we should live. We are so fortunate to simply be able to choose, and from such a wide ranging set of choices.

- **What factors influence most the decisions we take?**

From ancient times in human development, learning about life and experience would be handed down (as it was to me) to the next generations often with story telling, maybe some drawings, examples, experience, training and an interpretation of rules to live by.

Over time humans have developed language and other communication skills as a race and developed societies and communities for preservation and sustainability against risks and for communal gain too as well as for satisfaction. Freedom and choice remains significant factors across how the human race has developed, as has the recognition of skills, expertise and opportunities. Recorded history plays a significant part.

- **How far from the truth is history?**
- **Does history repeat itself?**
- **What helps us develop our own beliefs – truth for ourselves?**

Worldwide migration originally spread ideas around up to the point at which, with ingenuity and discovery, we can now instantaneously communicate (even face to face) around the whole world. Texts and inventions litter our growing experiences of our world, and what we are told, as well as what we see becomes something we choose whether to accept. We analyse formally or informally what is around us, and part of that is survival, part of it learning and part of it is for discovery and “self fulfillment”.

- **Do we choose freely or are we constrained in our decisions about our lives?**

Reflection of the human state, for many people, means that life has something more: that we each have a spiritual dimension. Discernment of our spirit leads many of us to seek a belief system and since early times religions have developed amongst human groups. Countless religions exist, with a smaller number of “mainstream” faiths. Followers have views on life’s purpose and many religions have a deity (one or more).

Our Christian religion has developed over centuries, the crux being the manifestation of God on earth in the form of his son, Jesus Christ. Words record our religion in our Holy Book- the Bible, containing, we believe, the word of God. Our

language has developed alongside our Christian religion and many words have both a religious and secular sense and application.

Discipleship

Whilst the word **disciple** has, for Christians, the New Testament examples of the followers of Jesus Christ, particularly the 12 specifically chosen by Jesus, the derivation and application of the word is much wider and not just a word from long ago.

There is an aspect which links the word disciple back to the word discipline. The sense of discipline is related to correction and may well link to punishment, but also the word applies to a focus on the study of a particular subject, the following of a particular track, constraining study or behaviour. Even in our Christian faith there are those references to resisting temptations and disciplining yourself.

Discipline can be something imposed, and there is no element of choice. However, choosing to follow a discipline is possible either in the academic sense, or in the sense of following a belief, and the actions related to that, in fact becoming a disciple. Followers of a person or a subject can be called disciples.

Followers of Jesus Christ are known by a number of terms e.g. Christians, believers, disciples, saints, etc. **(Do you know other terms?)**

- **What then for us?** Matthew 10. 32-33, 1 Peter 2.21
- **Are all Christians disciples?** Mark 8.34, John 8.31-32, Acts 11.26
- **How should we develop?** Luke 9.23, Luke 14.33
- **What actually do we do then as disciples of Jesus?** Matthew 28. 18-20.
John 13.34-35
- **What about the cost?** Luke 14.26-27

The named disciples of Jesus in the Gospels became known as Apostles. What's the difference between an Apostle and a Disciple? A disciple is a follower or learner. Whereas Apostle is a Greek term meaning "one who is sent off". Apostles are people on a mission to accomplish something, while disciples are people following and learning from a teacher or leader.

- **Can we identify those around us as disciples, apostles and saints?**
- **What next?** Acts 6.2

Matthew 5:16: Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.