
Words of Truth

“By This Shall All Men Know...”

By: Brian A. Yeager

A Christian is a disciple of the Lord (Acts 11:26). We know that a disciple of the Lord is someone who not only hears the truth, but also is set free from sin and continues in the truth (John 8:31-32). There is a long list of things we must do to be set free from sin (Matthew 13:19, Matthew 18:3, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 13:3; 5, Luke 14:25-33, John 3:1-5, John 8:23-24, Acts 2:14-47, Acts 3:19, Acts 8:12-39, Acts 9:1-20, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 16:13-15, Acts 16:25-34, Acts 18:8, Acts 19:1-9, Romans 1:16, Romans 8:24, Romans 10:10, Romans 10:14-17, I Corinthians 15:1-4, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 1:23, Colossians 2:12, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:21-25, James 2:10-26, I Peter 2:1-2, II Peter 3:10-14, etc.). With those Scriptures, we can know that people who have not properly obeyed the Gospel are not Christians. However, what about those who have obeyed the Scriptures? Does that mean they are faithful Christians?

We can look at the people one has fellowship with and know whether or not they are faithful (Ephesians 5:11 and I John 1:3-7). We can look at what a person does in worship to know whether or not they are faithful (Mark 7:1-9, John 4:24, and Colossians 2:18-23). You can examine what a person teaches to know whether or not they are faithful (I Thessalonians 5:21). You can even tell the faithfulness of a person by the company that he or she keeps (James 4:4) as long as you don't take that overboard (I Corinthians 5:9-13).

These are things we talk about often. We know that one's fruit tells us a lot about them (Matthew 7:15-20). Yet, there is something we can overlook as an identifying mark of a Christian if we are not careful. In fact, there is one action that our Lord specifically tells us to look for when identifying our fellow disciples. That one thing is that a true disciple of the Lord will love his or her brethren.

If Ye Have Love One To Another

*“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. **By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another**” (John 13:34-35). Notice another text that makes this point and even adds some other points to it: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and*

slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:7-15).

From what we just read from the inspired word of God, a Christian is identifiable by his or her love for the brethren. Additionally, we learned that one who hates his or her brethren is a murderer. In fact, you cannot hate your brethren and love God at the same time (I John 4:20). Thus, looking at how one feels about his or her brethren is really a clear identifier of faithfulness to God.

Consider these Scriptures: *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John 2:9-11).* Now let's make some applications.

Applying These Points

Let's say there are two Christians by the names of Timmy and Tammy. Timmy and Tammy are part of the same local church. They have been taught to be of one mind, have compassion one of another, to have love as brethren, to be pitiful, to be courteous (I Peter 3:8). On Sunday morning they are at each other's throats. Timmy says that he knows Tammy is his sister in Christ, but he believes that does not mean he has to like her. In fact, Timmy says he doesn't want to be near her if he does not have to be. Obviously, that is not brotherly love.

What if the feelings between Timmy and Tammy aren't so obvious though? What if the hatred is hidden? What if Timmy and Tammy act one way toward each other, but then express other things when one is not in the company of the other? Brethren, loving one another is not about putting on a show or acting a certain way in each other's company. Just as loving our Lord is shown through actions (John 14:15), loving our brethren is also shown through actions (I John 3:16-21).

Test your love for your brethren and thus your discipleship of Christ. How? Ask yourself some questions based upon what the Scriptures teach us about loving our brethren. For example, would you be willing to give your life for your brethren as Jesus did for you (John 15:12-13)? Would you give up your possessions to help your brethren (Acts 4:31-34 and Acts 11:27-30)? Would you put your brethren before yourself (Philippians 2:24-30)? How do you measure up to the discipleship tests?

Conclusion

Yes, you can examine all the things we talked about at the beginning of this study to find out if someone is faithful to the Lord or not. However, you have to include how one's relationship with his or her brethren is because the Lord commands us to do so. Just as we are commanded to walk in the truth, we are also taught of God to love our brethren (I Thessalonians 4:9). Let's be sure that we are showing the world we are the Lord's disciples by having love one to another.