



The Test of Discipleship - 8

**(1) TO WHAT DOES THIS VERSE
COMPARE THE WORK OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT?**

John 3:8

Related Texts: Ecclesiastes 11:5; Acts 2:2; 4:31; John 3:5

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the steps in how he was changed, but this does not mean that he isn't. Christ told Nicodemus that the Spirit of God is like the wind. He is not seen, yet the effect is plainly seen and felt as He works upon our hearts. That renewing power

that our human eyes cannot see puts a new life in the heart. He makes us new and in the image of God. Even though the work of the Spirit is silent and we don't always know He is present, His influence is working there. If the heart has been made new by the Spirit of God, that person's life will show it.

**(2) HOW IS THE LIFE CHANGED
AND HEART MADE NEW?**

2 Corinthians 5:17

Related Texts: Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 36:26; 18:27-31; Ephesians 2:10; 4:23, 24; Romans 6:4-6; 8:10

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We cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves to God. Even though we cannot and must not trust ourselves or our good works to change us, how we live will show whether the grace of God is living inside us. The way we are, our habits and the things we do will show a change. The difference will be clear about what these things have been and what they are now. The character is shown not by doing good or bad things once in a while, but by our tendencies in words and actions from day to day.

It is true that some people may act good on the outside but it doesn't come from the renewing power of Jesus. Their love of power and the desire for the respect of others may bring about a life that is in good order. Pride may be the reason some stay away from things that appear evil. A selfish heart can still do unselfish things. How can we know and determine whose side we are on?

To whom does our heart belong? Of whom do we think? About whom do we love to talk? To whom do we give our warmest affections and our best efforts? If we are Christ's our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are about Him. All that we have and are is given to Him. We long to be like Him, breathe His Spirit, do what He wants, and please Him in all things.

(3) WHAT CHARACTER TRAITS WILL BECOME EVIDENT IN OUR LIFE IF WE ARE TRULY BORN AGAIN?

Galatians 5:22, 23

Related Texts: Galatians 5:16, 17; Psalm 92:12-14; Matthew 12:33; Luke 8:14, 15

Those who are truly born again will reveal the fruits of the Spirit and no longer follow after what they used to desire. By their faith in the Son of God they will follow in His steps and reflect His character. With His power they will become cleansed and be like Jesus. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they now hate. People who were proud and bossy become humble and lowly in heart. The useless and boastful become earnest and humble. The alcoholic becomes sober, and the stained become spotless. The worthless ways and fads of the world are forgotten. Christians will not seek "outward adorning," but "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

(4) WHAT WILL WE DESIRE TO DO FOR THOSE WHOM WE HAVE WRONGED AFTER WE ARE BORN AGAIN?

Luke 19:8

Related Texts: Exodus 22:1; Matthew 5:23, 24; Luke 3:8; 1 Samuel 12:3; 2 Samuel 12:6

There is no proof of really being sorry for our sins unless it brings changes in our lives. The Bible teaches that we should show sincere repentance by giving back what we have taken, confessing our sins, loving God and our fellow men. When we as sinners do this, we may be sure that we have passed from death and gained life.

When, as sinful beings, we come to Jesus and accept His pardoning grace, love fills our heart. Every load that weights us down becomes light. The yoke that Christ wants us to carry is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice is a pleasure. The path that before seemed to be hidden in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness.

(5) WHO IS THE SOURCE OF LOVE THAT FILLS, CHANGES, AND FLOWS FROM THE HEART MADE NEW BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST?

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Related Texts: 1 John 4:7-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; James 1:17; Galatians 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:7

The loveliness of the character of Jesus will be seen in those who follow Him. It was His joy to do what God wanted Him to do. His love to God and love for His glory, was the power that guided our Saviour's life. Love made the things He did beautiful and good. Love comes from God. The heart that is not true to God cannot create love or cause it to grow. It can only be found in someone's heart where Jesus rules. "We love, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19, R.V. In the heart made new by the grace of Jesus, love dominates. Love changes us. It shows us what we should do; it gives us control over our passions; it is stronger than hatred, and helps us care for others. This love, cherished in our heart, brings us blessings as well as to those around us.

(6) WHAT WILL WE DESIRE TO DO TO SHOW OUR LOVE TO GOD?

John 14:15

Related Texts: John 14:21; 15:10-14; 21:15-17; Matthew 25:34-40; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:19-21

(7) WHY IS OBEDIENCE, BY THE POWER OF CHRIST, ESSENTIAL IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM?

1 John 2:4

Related Texts: 1 John 1:6-10; 4:20, 21; James 2:14-16; Titus 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:5

There are two kinds of mistakes that the children of God need to guard against, especially those who have just come to trust in the grace of Jesus. The first one that already has been mentioned, is to think that we can bring ourselves to God by our own works or efforts. Galatians 2:16. If we try to become holy by our own works in keeping the law, we are attempting to do what is impossible. All that we do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is only the grace of Christ that comes by faith, that can make us holy [Jeremiah 13:23].

The second danger, which is the opposite but no less dangerous, is believing that the grace of Jesus releases us from having to obey the law of God. It is dangerous to think that since, by faith alone we can have the grace of Christ, that we can continue in the ways of the world.

(8) WHAT HAS CHRIST PROMISED TO DO IN US WHEN WE ARE BORN AGAIN?

Hebrews 10:16

Related Texts: Hebrews 8:8-10; Jeremiah 31:33, 34; 32:40; Romans 8:2-4; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 37:31; 40:8; Isaiah 51:7; Ezekiel 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27

The law of God is an expression of who God is. It is a summary of the great principle of love, upon which His government in heaven and on earth is based. If our hearts are made new in the

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likeness of God, if God's love is present there, won't the law of God be carried out in our life? When the principle of love is living in our heart, when we are made new in the image of our Creator, the new-covenant promise becomes true: "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." And if the law is written in our heart, won't it shape our life? Obedience, the service and loyalty of love, is the true sign that we are following Jesus. The Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of freeing us from having to obey, it is faith, and faith only, that lets us take part in the grace of Jesus. Then, by grace, we are given the desire and ability to obey Him.

(9) WHAT IS AN INDICATOR OF THE MASTER WE SERVE?

Matthew 7:16, 20

Related Texts: Luke 6:43-45; John 15:4-7; James 3:12

We do not earn salvation by the act of obedience, it is a free gift from God that we get by faith. Obedience will result as the fruit of faith. "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." 1 John 3:5, 6. Here is the true test. If we are one with Christ, if God's love lives in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our motives, and the things we do will be in tune

with what God wants us to do as He told us in His holy law. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." 1 John 3:7. And to do what is right is determined by the standard of God's holy law, which is shown us in the ten principles given on Sinai.

(10) WHAT TWO ELEMENTS SHOULD BE EQUALLY PRESENT IN OUR LIFE AFTER GIVING OUR HEART TO THE LORD?

James 2:17

Related Texts: James 2:14, 19, 20, 26; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Peter 1:5-9; Galatians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Ephesians 2:8-10

When people think they have faith in Christ and claim it releases them from the responsibility of obeying God, this is not faith, it is presumption. "By grace are ye saved through faith" Ephesians 2:8. But "faith, if it hath not works, is dead." Jesus said this about Himself before He came to earth, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. And just before He went back to heaven He said, "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." John 15:10. This Scripture says, "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." 1 John 2:3.

(11) AFTER WHOSE EXAMPLE SHOULD WE MODEL OUR FAITH AND LIFE OF SERVICE?

1 Peter 2:21

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Related Texts: Matthew 10:38, 39; Psalm 85:13; Ephesians 5:1, 2; Philip-
pians 2:4, 5; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:16-18;
Luke 9:23-25; Hebrews 12:1, 2

(12) WHAT CHARACTERISTIC SHOULD WE SEEK AND IS PROMISED BY CHRIST TO THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR IT?

Matthew 5:6

Related Texts: Philippians 1:6; 3:9, 12-14; Proverbs 15:9; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22

The way to live eternally is the same now as it has always been. It is just what it was in the Garden of Eden before the fall of our first parents. It is to obey the Law of God; it is perfect righteousness. If eternal life were to be allowed to any being under any other conditions the happiness of the whole universe would be at risk. The way would be open for sin to last forever with all the grief and suffering that comes with it.

(13) WHAT PRIVILEGE DOES GOD OFFER EACH OF US?

2 Peter 1:4

Related Texts: Ezekiel 36:25-27; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 6:17, 18; Ephesians 4:23, 24; Hebrews 8:10-12; 12:10; John 1:12, 13; Colossians 3:10

(14) WHAT TWO-PART GIFT IS PROVIDED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD THAT, BY HIS GRACE, GIVES US RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Ephesians 1:7

Related Texts: Colossians 1:14; 1 Cor-
inthians 1:30; Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews
9:12-15; 10:16-19; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John
2:2; 4:10; Revelation 5:9; Psalm 130:7

Before Adam sinned he had a righteous character and it was his desire to obey the Law of God. But, as a result of sin, his desires changed from righteousness to evil and we have inherited this same fallen nature. Since we are sinful and unholy we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We do not have the ability to do what is right on our own so we are unable to obey the Law of God. But Jesus has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth and experienced the trials and temptations we go through. He lived a sinless life, then died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If we give ourselves to Him and accept Him as our Saviour, for His sake we are counted righteous no matter how sinful our lives may have been. Christ's character stands in place of our character, and we are accepted before God just as if we had not sinned.

(15) AFTER OUR REBIRTH EXPERIENCE IN CHRIST, HOW DO WE CONTINUE TO ABIDE AND GROW IN HIM?

Galatians 2:20

Related Texts: Romans 1:17; 5:2; 1 Peter 1:5-9; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 5:7; Hebrews 12:2; 11:6

When we are born again Christ changes our heart. He comes in and stays in our heart by faith. We are to keep close to Jesus by faith and by continually

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giving our will to Him. As long as we do this, He will work in us His will and help us to do the things He wants us to do. So you may say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in us, we will show the same spirit by doing what is right and obeying Him.

We have no reason to brag about ourselves or try to lift ourselves up. Our only reason for hope is in the goodness of Jesus that He puts within us and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

(16) WHAT STATEMENT IN THIS VERSE REVEALS THAT FAITH IS DIFFERENT FROM BELIEF?

James 2:19

Related Texts: James 2:20; Matthew 8:29; Luke 4:34; Acts 19:15; 1 Peter 1:5

When we talk about faith and belief, there is a difference that should be kept in mind. There is a kind of belief that is totally different from faith. God exists, He is powerful and the fact that His Word is true, even Satan and the fallen angels cannot at heart deny. The Bible says that “the devils also believe, and tremble,” but this is not faith. For true faith that works by love and purifies the soul, we must believe in God’s Word, surrender our will and heart to Him with our affections fixed upon Him. Through this faith our heart is made new in the image of God. And

the heart that has not been made new does not follow the law of God – in fact it cannot. A heart that is made new delights in the holy principles of the law by saying like David, the psalmist, “O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:97. And the goodness of the law is finished in us, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:1.

(17) HOW LONG WILL CHRIST CONTINUE TO PATIENTLY RE-FINE OUR CHARACTERS?

Philippians 1:6

Related Texts: Hebrews 12:2; 13:20, 21; Philippians 2:13; Psalm 138:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; 1 Peter 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:8

You may have come to know the forgiving love of Jesus and really want to be a child of God yet you realize that your character is imperfect. Your life has many things wrong with it so you have doubts about whether your heart has really been made new by the Holy Spirit. If this is what you are feeling do not be discouraged. Many times we will have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because we have failed to do His will and have made mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off nor forsaken by God.

(18) IF WE FALL INTO SIN DURING THIS LIFE-LONG CHARACTER BUILDING PROCESS, WHAT WONDERFUL PROMISE CAN WE CLAIM?

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1 John 2:1

Related Texts: Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:24, 25; 9:24

Christ is at the right hand of God, He is there to help us. Do not forget the words of Jesus, "The Father Himself loveth you." John 16:27. He wants to bring us back to Himself. He wants to see His holiness revealed in us. And if we will just give ourselves to Him, He that has started to do good things in us will keep doing them until the day of Jesus Christ. We must pray with more effort and believe more fully. Then, as we begin to distrust our own power, we will more fully trust the power of our Redeemer and we will praise Him who reveals His goodness in us.

(19) AFTER WE ARE BORN AGAIN AND ARE IN THE GROWTH PROCESS, WHAT WILL WE REALIZE?

Isaiah 64:6

I choose, by His grace, to walk in Christ's footsteps and follow Him as Lord and Master of my life.

Circle: Yes Undecided

Related Texts: Isaiah 53:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Job 15:16; Ephesians 2:1-3; Psalm 51:5; 130:3; Romans 7:18, 24; 3:23; 1 John 1:8; John 15:5

The closer you come to Jesus, the more sinful you will seem in your own eyes. Your faults will clearly be seen in contrast to His perfect nature. This shows proof that Satan's tricks have lost their power and that the life-giving power of the Spirit of God is awakening in you.

No deep-rooted love for Jesus can live in the heart of someone that does not see his own sinfulness. The person that is changed by the grace of Jesus will admire His holy character. If we do not see the bad in ourselves, this clearly shows that we have not seen the beauty and goodness of Jesus.

The less we see of that which we think is good in ourselves, the more we will see to admire in the endless purity and loveliness of Jesus our Saviour. The realization of our own sinfulness will bring us to Him who can forgive. When we realize our need for help and reach out to Jesus, He will show how powerful He is. The more our sense of need drives us to Jesus and to the Word of God, the clearer we will see how good He is and the more closely we will reflect His image.

My prayer is that the fruits of His Spirit will be seen in me so that I may reflect His righteous and holy character.

Circle: Yes Undecided