

Alias or Identity?

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When I was younger, my friends and I used to play a trick on the baristas at Starbucks. We would wait in line and order our coffee, but when they asked for a name to attach to our order we would offer an alias. We used the names of movie characters and sitcom personalities, and sometimes we'd trade names with one another. It was lame, but at the time we thought it was hilarious. There is a mischievous sort of pleasure derived from tricking someone into believing you are someone else.

Yet, no matter how many Starbucks baristas call me "Michael" or "Andy," I'm still Jonathan. That's my name, my identity. Jonathan was given to me at birth. Jonathan is on my legal documents. Jonathan is on all my various sorts of insurance. Dig into my background and quickly you will find my true identity. Just because you claim an identity doesn't mean that is your identity.

The same rule applies to the word "disciple." Millions across the world would claim that identity, but I imagine if you dug into their background you'd find that a hollow claim (Mt. 7:21-23). Just because you claim an identity doesn't mean that is your identity. You and I may claim to be disciples; that doesn't mean we are. What does Christ find when He digs into your background? Does He find the identifying marks of a true disciple, or would He find that "disciple" is just an alias you use on Sundays?"

You can't claim to be His disciple unless you recognize His authority (Matthew 10:24-25). We must realize that the word disciple means more than just a saved person. A disciple has subjected their entire life under the teaching and example of another. They do not emulate some of what they've been taught but every bit of it, because they truly believe in the superiority of their Master.

If you are truly a disciple you would not doubt that Jesus' way is best. Moreover, if you were a disciple you would not try to avoid, side-step or find a loophole around what the Lord had taught, nor would you give a half-hearted effort in implementing His instructions into your life. True disciples believe their Master is greater, so they hunger and thirst to hear and follow His commands. Disciples consider instructions as blessings, not burdens (I John 5:3).

You can't claim to be His disciple unless you claim to be His disciple (Matthew 10:27, 32-33). You know what I mean, don't you? True disciples do not claim to be disciples only in the company of other disciples, they proclaim it everywhere. It does not matter where they are or who surrounds them or in what sort of situation they find themselves, disciples will tell you to whom they belong. True disciples carry an undeniable streak of boldness, enough boldness to stare down powerful men who

murdered their teacher and declare, "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19).

If you are a disciple, a real one, your awe for your Master would overwhelm any reservations you had about confessing His name. And not only His name, but His teaching, too (Matthew 10:27-28). Disciples worry far more about failing to stand up for their Master than they worry about offending those who do not belong to Him. It may be the case that if my speech doesn't offend someone I'm not doing my part as a disciple. Matthew 10:34-35 certainly indicates as much. (Bear in mind that is about what I say, not how I say it. A disciple's speech will always be seasoned with wisdom). Maybe that's something we all need to consider a little more closely.

You can't claim to be a disciple unless you hand over your life (Matthew 10:39).

This we cannot afford to miss. The disciple considers this life lost. A disciple sees their time on Earth as if they were on the clock. They are not the master of the house, but servants. Just as Jesus told His mother in Jerusalem, disciples must be about their Father's business.

If you are truly a disciple, you aren't living for yourself. Disciples go all in for somebody else. They aren't looking to give just enough to Jesus to get Him off their back. They aren't looking to just barely skip over the fires of Hell. They aren't looking to do only the bare minimum. Disciples desperately desire to give their entire being over to the Lord in service to Him. None of us will do that perfectly, but real disciples are those who are striving to do just that.

Jesus doesn't care what label I slap on my back, He cares about my true identity. My prayer for myself and for all of you is we all may rightfully claim the identity of "disciple." Anything less is too little in the day of Judgment.