I want you to imagine with me for a moment that you have been brought into a court of law, charged with being a Christian. Would there be enough evidence to convict you?

With “the burden of proof” resting squarely upon your shoulders, what evidence would you offer the court to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that you truly are a follower of Jesus Christ?

Would you say something like, “Your Honor, I go to Church every Sunday morning and Sunday night.........and I make a donation to my Church each week. I have a “fish symbol” on the back of my vehicle and religious bumper stickers plastered all over my rear bumper. I pray before every meal. I wear religious tee-shirts out in public. I say “God bless you” when someone sneezes. I don’t smoke or drink or swear and I never watch R-rated movies.

Based on that evidence alone, would the court convict you of being a Christian or would the court dismiss the charges for lack of solid evidence?

Today as we continue with our series of messages on “Counting The Cost” we are going to be looking at three pieces of evidence that Christ Himself says is “proof” that we are truly one of His disciples.
The first evidence is this:

I. **A True Disciple ABIDES IN THE WORD OF GOD** (John 8:31,32)

John 8:31,32 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

1. When Jesus says, **“IF you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed,”** the implication is there are those who are not true disciples. There are authentic disciples and there are in-authentic disciples.

   Not everyone who “professes” to be a Christian is a true follower of Christ.

2. If you were to look at the membership book of this Church or any other Church for that matter, you would find listed among the names of “active members,” the names of many people who never darken the doors of this or any other Church building.

3. In many cases, these are individuals who at some point in their life made a “quick, impulsive” decision to follow Christ. It may have been during a revival meeting when their emotions were running high........or perhaps it was during the time of a personal or family crisis.......or shortly after the loss of a loved one. But for one reason or another they didn't follow through with their commitment.

4. Jesus is telling us one way we can tell the difference between a true disciple and a false disciple is that a true disciple abides in His word. **“If you abide in My word you are My disciples indeed.”**
5. Now, what does Jesus mean when He says, “If you abide in My word?”

The word “abide” means to remain in or continue in or to dwell in.

6. Just like your home is the place where you dwell or live, the word of God is the true disciples’ dwelling place.

7. One of the sure evidences that one is a true disciple is that he or she will remain or continue in the word.

A true disciple loves the word of GOD. He loves to hear the word of God preached and taught.

A true disciple will read the word and study the word. A true disciple will saturate his mind and heart with the word of God. A true disciple will not just be “a hearer” of the word, but also “a doer.”

8. When one is abiding in the word of God there will be steady spiritual growth.

When one is abiding in the word of God his or her life will be characterized by holiness rather than sinfulness.

When one is abiding in the word of God he or she will determine right and wrong by what the word of God says rather than by feelings and emotions.

9. Now let’s say you rarely, if ever pick up your Bible and read it. What does that mean? It means you have lost your hunger for the word of God.
When you don't eat physical food, you get hungry and you start craving for food. When you don't feed on the word of God the exact opposite happens. You lose your hunger. You lose your appetite. And the longer you go without reading and studying your Bible the less you hunger for it.

10. How do you get your “appetite” back for the word of God? Dr. David Jeremiah puts it this way:

“To get your appetite back for the word of GOD you have to do force feeding. That means you grab your Bible, and you set yourself down in a chair, and you open your Bible on the desk or table in front of you and you start reading. If you get sleepy, start reading as loud as you can. And you keep reading until you start hungering for more of the word. And you do this day after day until you hunger for the word every day.”

11. How about you? Do you hunger for God's word? Or have you completely lost your appetite?

A True Disciple ABIDES In the WORD of GOD.

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Now here is the second evidence..........

II. A True Disciple LOVES HIS FELLOW CHRISTIANS
(John 13:34,35)

John 13:34,35 (NKJV)  A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1. Jesus is giving us an “outward view” of Christianity. By that I mean, when the world looks at Christians the one thing that ought to distinguish us as true disciples of Jesus Christ is our love for one another.

When the world sees the disciples of Muhammed they identify them with HATRED and TERRORISM. When the world looks at Christians they should identify us with LOVE and COMPASSION.

2. The Pharisees of Jesus' day sought to distinguish themselves as “true men of GOD” by wearing long robes with tassles and bells on the fringes and the wearing of large phylacteries or “prayer boxes” across their foreheads........ and by praying loudly on the street corners and making sure everyone saw them when they gave money to the poor.

3. In total contrast, Jesus says, “By this all will know you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus doesn't say, “All men will know you are My disciples If you have been baptized......or If you go to Church every Sunday.......or if you are member of such and such denomination. He says, “All will know that you are My disciples IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.
4. Does “loving one another” mean we will never have any differences of opinion or have disagreements? Absolutely not!

-The disciples of Jesus argued over which of them would be the greatest in heaven. But the disciples still loved each other.

-Paul and Barnabas had such a sharp disagreement over whether or not they should take young John Mark on their missionary journey that they had to part ways. But Paul and Barnabas still loved each other.

**ILLUSTRATION** I'll never forget sitting in a board meeting many years ago when a disagreement broke out between two men, one a deacon, the other an elder. All the sudden out of nowhere the deacon revealed his true feelings towards that elder. He said, “I can't stand to be in this same room with you......I can't even stand to look at you.”

That deacon's hatred towards that elder raised serious doubts about whether or not he was a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

I have known Christians who wouldn't sit in the same pew with each other. I have seen Christians who refused to shake hands or even speak with a fellow Christian. I have known Christian men who would not even serve at the Lord's table with another brother-in-Christ whom they couldn't stand.

If Christians who love one another are called “true disciples,” Then what do you call a person who “professes” to be a Christian who hates a brother or sister-in-Christ?

**I JOHN 4:20,21 (NKJV)** If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.
5. How are we to love one another? Jesus tells us in verse 34 that we are to “love one another the same we He has loved us.”

(A) Jesus’ love for us was a SELFLESS love. Jesus never loved someone for what they could do for Him or for what He could get out of them. His love was purely selfless, thinking only of the best interest of the other. That is the kind of love a true disciple has for his brothers and sisters-in-Christ. Do you have A SELFLESS LOVE?

(B) Jesus’ love for us was a FORGIVING love.

Peter denied Jesus and yet Jesus still loved him. The disciples forsook Him and yet Jesus still loved them. Christ’s love for His brothers was so strong He could forgive their worst offenses against Him. That is the kind of love a true disciple has for his brothers and sisters-in-Christ. Do you have a FORGIVING LOVE?

(C) Jesus’ love for us was a SACRIFICIAL love.

He came to serve not to be served. He kneeled down and washed the dirty feet of His disciples and ultimately He went to the cross to lay down His life for us. That is the kind of love a true disciple has for his brothers and sisters-in-Christ. Do you have A SACRIFICIAL LOVE?

A True Disciple ABIDES IN THE WORD OF GOD.

A True Disciple LOVES HIS FELLOW CHRISTIANS.
And the third evidence is:

III. A True Disciple BEARS SPIRITUAL FRUIT (John 15:7,8)

John 15:7,8 (NKJV) If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

1. A “fruitless” disciple is a total contradiction in terms. If there is no spiritual fruit in our lives, we cannot claim to be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

   If an apple tree bears no apples, can it truly be called an apple tree? If a pecan tree bears no pecans, can it truly be called a pecan tree?

2. The presence of “spiritual fruit” in our lives is evidence we are a true disciple of Jesus.

3. How do we define the kind of “fruit” Jesus is talking about? Primarily “the fruit” Jesus is talking about is those things in our spiritual life that first and foremost bring GLORY to GOD, and secondly BENEFIT our fellow man, especially our fellow Christians.

4. This “spiritual fruit” basically falls into two categories:

   (A) There is the INWARD FRUIT of Christ-like CHARACTER

   Galatians 5:22,23 (NKJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
This “fruit” is very evident in a true disciple of Jesus Christ. The love of Christ........the joy of Christ.......the peace of Christ........the patience of Christ........all of these Christ-like qualities are very obvious in an authentic disciple.

(B) Then there is THE OUTWARD FRUIT of Christ-like SERVICE

The sharing of our faith with those who do not know Christ........the sharing of our possessions with those who are less fortunate......our deeds of kindness towards others.....our continuous offering of praise and thanksgiving to GOD........these are just some of the “outward spiritual fruit” that is evident in the life of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

5. A lot of Christians have lots of “pretty spiritual leaves” but they bear little if any “real fruit.” God is not interested in our “pretty leaves,” He is only interested in our “real spiritual fruit.” And so God will “prune” anything and everything from our lives that is holding us back and keeping us from being fruitful.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of the message I asked you the soul-searching question: “If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

How would you answer that question now that you have heard the kind of evidence Christ is looking for in a true disciple?

Are you ABIDING IN THE WORD OF GOD? 
Do you LOVE YOUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS? 
Are you BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT?

May all of us be found “Guilty as charged!”