Five Signs that Discipleship Transforms a Believer’s Life

What evidence of spiritual growth does God expect in a believer's life?

The measure of discipleship is how much a believer is like Jesus. Let's look at the things that reflect a transformed heart - for it is by mirroring the heart of God that believers glorify God. God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

The transformed believer ...

**Models Love, Trust, and Obedience.**Transformation of a believer's character will be evidenced by responding to the demands and events of life in the same character and manner as Jesus. "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21).

At the core of spiritual transformation rests this truth: Love and trust result in obedience. Obedience in a believer's relationship with Jesus produces even greater love and stronger faith. That doesn't imply that obedience is always easy. Obedience certainly wasn't easy for Jesus as the dark shadow of the cross inched ever closer to Him. Without Jesus' obedience, the world would have been lost. Without the obedience of believers, the church is just a social center. (See 1 John 5:2-5.)

**Lives in Harmony with God's Word.**
For believers, transformation is walking His Words, day in and day out, not just talking them. It's living God's Word out loud. Transformed believers live the Word of God and thus love God and others the wayJesus loves them. Fruit then is produced - not because of who is watching but because of Who is guiding the actions. "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8).

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus says, "Come to me ... learn from me ... and you will find rest for your souls." The believer in the process of being transformed comes to God's Word for the wisdom and sustenance found there. The question, "How will this affect my relationship with Jesus?" becomes the lens through which believers look at every aspect of life.

**Sees the World Through the Lens of Scripture.**
God calls believers to see the world as Jesus did - to love the lost as He does. God calls us to share His love with others. Transformed believers seize God-given opportunities to make a difference in the world.

With the lens of Scripture focusing our lives, things take on a clear perspective. Fear about spreading the gospel is replaced by a fervency to do so. Casual Christianity is replaced by commitment. Making a mere appearance in the world does not suffice; making a difference in the world, just as Jesus did, becomes the primary goal.

**Has a Relationship with Other Believers.**The Holy Spirit draws people of all different personalities, perspectives, and gifts together into a distinct and dedicated relationship with God, united as one spiritual family (the church) for His possession, use, and glory. Believers are given different gifts by God so that the work of ministry may be accomplished efficiently. All believers have one calling: glorify Him.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Rom. 15:5-7).

The visibly transformed heart hears this ultimate calling to glorify God and reaches out to join hands with other believers. Such a heart cultivates unity in the body of Christ by praying for other Christians, by avoiding gossip, by building others up, by working together in humility, by exalting Christ, and by refusing to get sidetracked arguing over details. It is a peaceful heart, not a warring one. It is a heart like the heart of Jesus. (See Phil. 2:1-6.)

**Makes God's Love Known to Others.**A transformed believer's love for God is reflected in loving people so much that the believer is compelled to make God's love known.

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

God gives the transformed believer a new heart that propels him to reach out to the lost. Just as Jesus dedicated His life to making disciples, the transformed believer is dedicated to making disciples who, in turn, make more disciples. God's good, pleasing, and perfect will is that the believer become like Jesus and make the love of God known to others (see Rom. 12:1-2).