

Marks of True Followers of Jesus

True followers of Jesus are marked by, among other things, the following attributes.

Suffering witness: Jesus's followers bear confident witness to his true identity as fully God and fully man—the Son of God, the promised Messiah-Christ-King, the Lamb of God who saves us from our sin, and the risen, ruling Son of Man. These followers are so devoted to Jesus that they willingly suffer for his sake, leaving all—possessions, family, and honor—for the sake of Jesus and the eternal rewards of his kingdom. They bear witness of Jesus and his kingdom to each other, to the watching world, and to all of creation. They bear witness by word and action, by their gathered worship and their daily lives, and ultimately by their deaths. In this way Jesus' followers honor his greatest commandment—to love God with all our being.

Matt. 4:19; 16:15-17; 28:18-20; John 1:35-49; 6:66-69; 10:4-5, 27; 15:26-27; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Col. 3:16-17; Rev 14:1-5; Matt 4:18-22; 8:19-22; 9:9; 10:37-39; 16:24-26; 19:21-23; Mark 8:34-37; 10:28-30; Luke 5:11, 28; 9:23-24, 57-62; John 12:23-26.

Loving service: Jesus' followers imitate his way of loving others. They gladly suffer injustices without retaliating. They offer generous forgiveness to all who offend them, without holding grudges. They pray for their enemies and look for ways to creatively bless them, refusing to take up the sword. They are faithful in their marriages and all other relationship commitments. Their whole lives are characterized by selfless service, for they imitate the One who came not to be served but to serve—who gave up his divine rights, washed his disciples' feet, and laid down his life for the world. In this way Jesus' followers honor his second great commandment—to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Mark 15:41; John 12:26; Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 6:27-36; 22:25-27; 1 Pet. 2:20-24; 3:9-18; 5:1-3; Eph. 4:32; 5:1-2, 25; Col 3:13; John 13:14-16; Phil 2:4-7; Rom 15:1-3, 7.

Christian unity: Jesus' followers know there is one Flock and one Shepherd. They affirm that all who belong to Christ, the Head, also belong to the Church, his Body. They rejoice that people of every culture, color, and class find oneness in Christ alone. They know Jesus has promised to build his own Church which he purchased with his own blood. They don't divide over human leaders, but they do honor the teaching and imitate the example of Jesus' apostles, whom he appointed as a foundation for his true Church. They welcome all whom Christ has welcomed while disciplining those who falsely claim to belong to him. In this way Jesus' followers honor his final recorded prayer for them—that we may all be one in him.

Matt. 12:30; 16:18-19; 18:15-20; Mark 9:38-41; Luke 9:49-50; John 10:16; 17:20-23; Acts 2:42-47; 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-9; 11:1; 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6; Rom. 15:5-7; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 3:14-17; Rev. 7:9-10, 17.

Spirit-powered obedience: Jesus' followers honor his words by doing them. They do this by the Holy Spirit, their Helper sent by Jesus. They know they—like Jesus during his earthly life—will bear good fruit only by the power of the Spirit within them. They expect the Spirit will bear witness to Jesus by miraculous signs and special graces given as he wishes. They also expect the Spirit will empower them to live clearly counter-cultural lives of moral purity, relational integrity, and neighbor- and enemy-love—lives of humility, contentment, and trust in their heavenly Father. In this way Jesus' followers honor the great commission he gave them—to make disciples who are taught to do all that he commanded.

Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 6:46-49; John 14:15, 21-24; 1 John 2:4-6; Matt. 5-7; 22:37-40; Acts 10:38; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-2, 14-15, 18; Luke 3:16; 11:13; 12:11-12; 24:49; John 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4, 32-33, 38-39; Gal. 5:16-25.