

Basic Christian Traits: Loving, Knowing and Serving God

The traits defined below paint a picture of what a disciple using their gifts looks like.

Loving God:

Small Groups – disciples share their faith journey with a group of Christian friends in mutual encouragement and accountability, developing spiritual honesty and trust through sharing and support

Spiritual Disciplines – disciples practice various spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, worship, solitude, meditation, fasting) as a means of surrendering to Jesus and opening their life to the Holy Spirit's transforming activity

Transformation – disciples are being continually transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and sense that power molding their values, priorities and relationships into more Christ-like patterns

Fruit of the Spirit – disciples are continually growing in the inner qualities and outward actions identified as “the fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”

Surrender – disciples surrender the control of every aspect of their life to Jesus, repenting of sin, setting aside their own desires and sense of importance, and offering their lives in obedient service to God

Knowing God:

Christian Essentials – disciples understand the essential gospel on which most Christians agree, across denominational lines and centuries, expressed in historic creeds such as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and can share the gospel intelligently with a non-Christian friend

Bible Understanding – disciples know the grand sweep of the Bible's story of salvation, including a basic timeline of biblical events. They understand the divine/human nature of the Bible and know how to read it, not merely as an ancient document or a reference book of spiritual answers, but for personal spiritual growth

Basic Christian Ethics – disciples understand how to apply their Christian faith to important ethical issues, and are committed to living out Christian ethical principles such as justice, integrity, peace, and responsibility for the well-being of others

Knowing God's Will – disciples know the broad scope of God's purpose for human beings, and have a growing sense of how to discern God's will for their life through prayer, Bible study and the wisdom of other Christians

Church/United Methodism – disciples value the church as the Body of Christ, God's people journeying in community, and know the teachings characteristic of the Methodist movement (e.g. holding together grace and holiness, holding together personal salvation and social justice, free will, a commitment to Christian unity even when opinions differ)

Serving God:

Spiritual Gifts/Talents – disciples understand clearly, with “sober judgment” (Romans 12:3) which spiritual gifts and talents they have, and use those gifts to bless others and build up the Body of Christ

Financial Gifts – disciples view money and material possessions not as a measure of success or as a means of self-gratification, but as a resource for whose use they are responsible to God, and submit their financial lives to God’s guiding and control

Time – disciples see time as a gift from God to be used in keeping with God’s purposes, avoid compulsive busyness, and submit their calendars to God’s guiding and control

Service to Others – disciples are instruments of God’s love in a broken, hurting world, living lives of service to others with a strong (though not exclusive) focus on the Bible’s concern for the poor and for justice

Sharing Christ – disciples are eager to share the good news of Jesus in loving, winsome and non-judgmental ways, and are ready to “give an answer to anyone who asks the reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15)