

The Four Marks

The four tests Jesus named himself. About 20 minutes.

Jesus never left this vague. Four separate times he said, in so many words, here is how you can tell someone is my disciple. Most pathways measure only the first one.

Run this on one person you are walking with, or on your church's pathway as a whole. Answer each item Yes or No. Every No is a to-do, and the order at the end matters more than the score.

1 Word *John 8:31*

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. Abide is a staying word, not a visiting word.

- ☐ They can find their way around Scripture without being walked to the page.
- ☐ They have a repeatable habit, not a streak they keep restarting.
- ☐ In the last month, something they read changed an actual decision.

If this is the weak one: stop assigning more content. Give them one book of the Bible and one person to read it with.

2 Love *John 13:35*

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Outsiders do the noticing.

- ☐ At least three people in the church know their name and their story.
- ☐ They have said a hard thing out loud in a room and were not abandoned for it.
- ☐ Someone outside the church could name a way they were loved by this community.

If this is the weak one: this is a room problem, not a teaching problem. Put them at the same table with the same people every week.

3 Fruit *John 15:8*

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. Fruit grows from connection, not strain.

- ☐ Someone else has clearly benefited from their faith, and you could name who.
- ☐ They serve somewhere that costs them time, money, or comfort.
- ☐ At least one area of character looks different than it did a year ago.

If this is the weak one: do not push here first. Fruit follows Word and Love. Check marks 1 and 2 before you press on this one.

4 Surrender *Luke 14:27, 33*

Three times in one paragraph Jesus says a person cannot be my disciple. He was being honest about the price.

- ☐ They have said no to something real because of Jesus.
- ☐ Their calendar and their money look different than they used to.
- ☐ They know following costs something, and they said yes with their eyes open.

If this is the weak one: stop softening the ask. People commit to what is asked clearly, not to what is made easy.

The Hallway, Scoring, and What To Do First

Belonging is the part you can change this month.

The hallway check

In Acts, the time between believing and being publicly counted in was measured in hours. Ours is usually measured in months. That waiting room is where most people stall. Answer these about your church.

- ☐ Someone who says yes on Sunday knows by Tuesday where they are going and who is going with them.
- ☐ Baptism is offered as the front door, not as something you earn after a class.
- ☐ One specific person owns their first ninety days, by name.
- ☐ They are in a room with people within fourteen days, not just handed content.
- ☐ Our teaching ends with what we will do and when, not only with what is true.

Your score on the twelve marks questions

10 to 12 Yes	Strong. All four marks are alive. Add someone new and start again.
6 to 9 Yes	Normal. One or two marks are quietly carrying the rest. Find the weak one.
0 to 5 Yes	An honest starting point. Begin with Mark 2. Almost nothing here grows alone.

Work on them in this order

- **1. Love first.** Three of the four marks need other people. Fix the room before you fix the curriculum.
- **2. Word next.** One book of the Bible and one reading partner beats any program you could buy.
- **3. Surrender before fruit.** People produce after they have settled who is in charge, not before.
- **4. Fruit last.** It is the evidence, not the lever. Pushing on it directly usually produces performance.
- **5. Shorten the hallway.** Moving belonging to day one is the highest leverage change most churches can make.

The one thing worth remembering

Jesus measured disciples by who they were becoming. Most of our pathways measure what people know. Those two scorecards look similar on paper and produce completely different churches. If you change only one thing this year, change what you count.

This week's one move

Pick your lowest-scoring mark. Choose one person. Do one thing. Put a date on it.

My one move: _____ By: _____

Everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

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