

“Take up your cross... and follow me!”

LUKE 9:23

What does “discipleship” mean? Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, then he must deny himself and daily take up his cross and follow me.”

Notice first that being a disciple of Jesus is more than believing. Yes, one is to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” But belief is more than “agreeing” with or assenting to a set of doctrines or principles. It takes a deeper commitment than simply admiring Jesus’ teachings. There are three steps: 1. Deny oneself: This means replacing “me” and putting Jesus at the center of one’s life. Because we confess that we are sinful this will challenge our basic instincts for self-gratification as humans. 2. Take up your cross, daily: The cross of Jesus is not the annoying and petty problems we face as human beings. The cross we are to take up is about dying to ourselves and living for God and others which will by its very nature be counter-cultural. Notice that this is not a one-time decision but as Martin Luther reminds us, a daily dying and rising with Christ and a life-time journey of faith. 3. Finally, follow me: Just as Jesus’ disciples long ago followed their rabbi/teacher, our discipleship today is a daily following of Jesus as he leads, guides lives. That journey will involve suffering and pain- count on it- but it will also bring deep joy and peace knowing God is using us to bring about his kingdom.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to you to put Jesus at the center of your life? To deny yourself?
- Can you think of a time recently when you took up your cross and followed?

Family Activity:

Think of something that you can do to follow Jesus and care for others. Are there toys or other household items that are no longer used? Gather them and deliver them to a homeless shelter or save all your change for the week and donate it to help the needy. Is there something that you can volunteer to do at your church?

Teenage Activity:

Living for God and others can mean making choices. Ask God for direction on how you can serve him today. Is there someone who needs your help or prayer? Activate the Compass or add as an app on your smart phone – use it as a reminder to ask God for direction.

Or find a cross in your home and take 5 minutes to quietly meditate on God’s costly love.

Adult Activity:

Think about where you see God at work in your life. How is God leading you to serve him? List your gifts, passions and abilities. How could you use those to serve others in your church or in the community?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus you have asked me to take up my cross and follow you. I need your guidance. Guide me in...