

Take Up Your Cross Daily

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

Luke 9:23

Introduction:

1. The context is good and may be found in three gospels (Matt 16:13-28; Mark 8:27-38; Luke 9:18-27).
 - a. Discipleship is not following great godly men, but the Son of God (16:13-16; 8:27-30; 9:18-21).
 - b. His Divine authority, kingdom, and victory are not light matters to be despised (16:17-20).
 - c. Though Christ of God, His Son, and King, He would suffer and die (16:21-23; 8:31-33; 9:22).
 - d. Jesus calls men to be His disciples with a precise and costly call of suffering (16:24; 8:34; 9:23).
 - e. Discipleship carries a cost of acceptance and a cost of rejection (16:25-26; 8:35-37; 9:24-25).
 - f. He warned of Jerusalem’s judgment to reward all men by King Jesus (16:27-28; 8:38; 9:26-27).
2. I have nothing glamorous, exciting, novel, creative, or pleasant, unless you desire to be Christ’s disciple.
3. This message is totally contrary to the direction of the world and thinking of contemporary Christianity.
4. I speak on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, for I am His ambassador and servant to you for Him.
5. True Christians must be disciples (Acts 11:26), and disciples are those who live this text every day.
6. We are making progress on our web site, but of what value are words without lives of discipleship?

I. IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME

- A. Of course, no man will go after Jesus Christ but by grace (Romans 3:9-18; John 6:44).
- B. Yet, it is also true, unless we go after Him as defined, we despise His grace (II Cor 6:1).
- C. Here is an offer from the Lord of glory, not of eternal life, but of personal discipleship.
- D. Most everyone in this assembly has declared themselves Christ’s disciples by baptism.
- E. Discipleship is based on the identity of Jesus as the Christ and Son of the living God.
- F. Yet, discipleship is also based on the fact that His kingdom is not of this world.
- G. Discipleship of Jesus Christ is not a light matter or an easy matter. It has conditions.
- H. Jesus is not just a prophet: He is the Son of God: He dictates conditions of discipleship.
- I. True Christianity is a choice to follow Christ and repudiate all other worldly ambitions.
- J. Following Christ has a cost that must be measured, and it must be paid (Luke 14:25-33).
- K. There is no other way of being a Christian – it is His way or the highway to two hells.
- L. The abundant life of love, joy, peace, and contentment in Christ is only found this way.
- M. Rather than thinking of success, rank, and prestige, true disciples prepare for suffering.
- N. Forget every concept of Christianity you have heard and submit to this text, for every idea of contemporary Christianity that makes discipleship easy without cost is a lie.
- O. You cannot serve Christ and mammon (Matt 6:24), nor Christ and money or pleasure.
- P. Our religion, gospel, truth, church, faith, hope, and lives are only as good as this text.

II. LET HIM DENY HIMSELF

- A. Christianity is a life of self-denial, and it is to be taught authoritatively (Titus 2:11-15).
- B. Self-denial is sacrificial and painful; it is the life of a successful athlete (I Cor 9:24-27).
- C. All that is in the world is not of our Lord Jesus and must be hated (I John 2:15-17).
 1. Our eyes see things we want – the lust of the eyes, so we cover eyes and deny.
 2. Our flesh craves things we want – the lust of the flesh, so we starve it and deny.
 3. Our pride wants to promote ourselves – the pride of life, so we choose service.
- D. By nature we default to sin only and always and quickly, so we have to deny ourselves.
- E. The world seeks us personally and intimately by seducing us with our very own lusts.
- F. Little television can be justified; it will seductively destroy your soul. Deny yourself!
- G. Are you too proud to confess your faults and apologize to your spouse? Deny yourself!

- H. Are you too selfish and lazy to initiate more affection in your marriage? Deny yourself!
- I. Is it hard to get up fifteen minutes early to read and pray before work? Deny yourself!
- J. Is it easier to work in the yard or read a book then to lead devotions? Deny yourself!
- K. Have you stayed up very late on Saturday nights for many years? Deny yourself!
- L. Have you slept in very late on Sunday mornings for many years? Deny yourself!
- M. You know you should give financially to the Lord, but can't find it? Deny yourself!
- N. Does reading the Bible take time, effort, and concentration? Deny yourself!
- O. Does your temperament make it easy to talk too much? Too little? Deny yourself!
- P. I laugh when I hear, "I don't have enough time," for we waste so much on ourselves.
- Q. Carnal Christianity, which Paul warned against, esteems pleasure higher than God and rejects Christ's authority to require lives of self-denial (II Tim 3:1-5). We reject it!
- R. A church near advertises, "If you come back, we promise not to throw the book at you."
- S. We must put off the old man and every sinful thing associated with him (Eph 4:17-32).
- T. If you try to save your life by preserving your favorite sins or distractions, you will lose your life both now and in the world to come.
- U. No man has given up anything for Jesus Christ who is not rewarded richly in both worlds (Matthew 19:27-29; Mark 10:28-30; Luke 18:28-30; II Corinthians 4:16-18).

III. AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS

- A. A cross was the instrument and means of horrific suffering and a slow death by Rome.
- B. Taking up our cross is choosing to deny ourselves those things that Christ condemns.
- C. Taking up our cross is choosing to live a life of suffering and death in worldly things.
- D. Taking up our cross is choosing to endure the loss of all things contrary to Christ.
- E. Taking up our cross is choosing to live for the pleasure of Jesus Christ at any cost.
- F. We don't lay down on the cross, and then whine about our horrible fate as martyrs.
- G. We each have a cross, and on that cross we nail anything displeasing to our Lord Jesus.
- H. We are to be crucified with Jesus Christ (Gal 2:20), crucify our lusts (Gal 5:24), crucify the world (Gal 6:14), and mortify our members (Col 3:5).
- I. Any choice for Christ that costs may be called a cross, but we cannot boast or whine.
- J. Circumstances can neither cause nor excuse sin; they are the squealing of a pretender.
 1. Don't ever say "if only" about discipleship, for change wouldn't make it easier.
 2. Don't ever say "it's so hard" about discipleship, for it is a most glorious blessing.
 3. Quit your complaining and whining, you have not resisted to blood (Heb 12:4).
- K. If your wife is not perfect ... in looks ... temperament ... skills, then take up your cross.
- L. If your husband is not perfect ... in romance ... wealth ... wisdom, take up your cross.
- M. If you have a sore back, headaches, failing eyes, or kidney stones, take up your cross.
- N. If you have a froward master who is just a terrible boss, then take up your cross.
- O. If living simply and moderately means missing position and wealth, take up your cross.
- P. If your house is small, your job hard, your allergies bad, your finances bleak, your children needing braces, your soul being tempted, take up your cross.
- Q. We take up our cross by setting our affections on things above and despising this life.
- R. With the cross of Christ picked up, Satan and the world have little chance for our souls.

IV. DAILY

- A. Luke alone has this important adverb teaching us to take up our cross each day.
 - a. The segment of time called a day is by God's wisdom (Genesis 1:14).
 - b. We cannot do this weekly at our church assemblies, for this is not daily at all.
 - c. We cannot compartmentalize our Lord and restrict him to hours on Sundays.
 - d. The instruction is to exhort one another daily, while called today (Heb 3:12-13).

- e. Because sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof we must deny (Matthew 6:34).
- f. Moses wrote we must number our days and make them count wisely (Ps 90:12).
- g. Valuable projects require consistent effort each day i.e. athletics, education, etc.
- h. Rather than respond to sermons with grandiose ambitions, be holy that day.
- i. Rather than worry about being a life disciple of Christ, choose to be holy today.
- j. Satan wants you to see long time periods forward and backward to defeat you, so instead ask what you can do TODAY to deny yourself and take up your cross.
- k. What will you do today to follow Christ, deny yourself, and take up your cross.
- B. If you do not take up your cross and follow Jesus Christ first every day, you will lose.
- C. We are all backsliders by nature, and we will backslide daily without daily standing; and the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways (Proverbs 14:14).
- D. Each day we must repent and take up our cross; a lost day dulls your conscience, starts a habit, gives place to the devil, weakens your resolve, feeds the flesh, and stunts our zeal.

V. AND FOLLOW ME

- A. He is our Leader and our Example in suffering and death; surely we can suffer a little.
- B. In fact He is our example (I Peter 2:19-24), and in context He was also (Matt 16:21-24).
- C. He took His cross and gave much more than we give for us as enemies (Gal 6:14).
- D. We must submit ourselves to God's will, as He did facing crucifixion (Luke 22:41-46).
- E. Paul counted all things loss to know Christ's sufferings and His death (Phil 3:10).

Conclusion:

1. Our religion is a sham, a show, a profanity, an hypocrisy, and a blasphemy, if we don't do this.
2. The good life awaits those who truly follow this text; the way of transgressors is hard. Remember Lot!
3. The more Jesus Christ gives a man in knowledge and opportunity, the more He requires (Lu 12:47-48).
4. What shall we do? Remember from whence thou art fallen, repent, and do the first works (Rev 2:5).
5. If you hear this message, you have work to do today – deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Him.