

PREPARING TO SERVE

Being a disciple of Jesus demands that one is willing to put Jesus first in their lives. In **Luke 9:23** Jesus says, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

1. What is meant by the phrase “deny himself?”
2. How does one “take up his cross daily?”

Remember that the call to discipleship is grounded in the authority of Jesus. When asked, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter replied in **Luke 9:20**, *“The Christ of God.”* The word Christ is Greek and the Hebrew equivalent is Messiah. These terms mean, “anointed one.” In Hebrew life it was prophets, priests, and kings who were anointed. This then tells us that Jesus is prophet, priest, and king. He is to rule in our lives.

Matthew 16:16 records Peter saying, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”* The authority of Jesus is seen in the fact that he is the Christ and again in his relationship to the Father.



Luke 9:24-27 adds this directive to the disciples of Jesus, *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*

3. How do people try to save their lives and how might we lose our lives for the sake of Christ? (Is Jesus speaking literally or figuratively?)

4. Why are the demands for discipleship so rigorous?

The call of Jesus to true discipleship is a call that requires much. It may or may not move us from our homes or our jobs, but it moves us to real service. It calls us to action. It makes a real demand upon our lives. We cannot live for Jesus and live like everyone else in this world. We cannot live like we lived before we came to Christ.



To often, the church has made our faith “all about us” promising the Christian forgiveness, fellowship, and a home in heaven. While all these things are true and are a great part of our hope, we are also called to holy living, productive service, the forfeiting of self-interest, and a love for Christ that compels us to share our faith.

Greg Ogden in *Discipleship Essentials* writes, “we finally find ourselves when we lose ourselves for Jesus’ sake. And how do we lose our lives for him? By investing all that we are and have for him and his gospel. By saying to him, “Here is my home, my checkbook, my talents and gifts, my brain, my heart, my hands, my feet, my mouth. Here--it’s all yours. Use it all to glorify yourself and further your purpose on earth.”¹

5. Why do you think this rigorous call to discipleship has sometimes been neglected in the church?

6. What was the cost to the apostles to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11; Mark 10:28-31)?

7. What do Matthew 7:13-14 and Philippians 3:7-11 teach us?

¹Ogden, Greg. *Discipleship Essentials: Expanded Edition*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007.

8. What prevented the man in Mark 10:17-22 from becoming a disciples of Jesus?
9. What traits would you expect to see in a true disciple of Jesus? (List Scripture references)

The fact that many within the church do not live lives that are truly devoted to God is foremost a reflection of priorities. As individuals, we do what we really want to do.

Second, there has been a failure of Christian leaders to disciple believers. This is at least in part because we have developed “spectators” within the church instead of participants. We have expected too little from the members of the church and have provided them no preparation for works of service.

Our programs can be slick and our assemblies choreographed to perfection, but since they have been largely non-participatory they have reinforced a leader/spectator mentality. While there is nothing wrong with powerful preaching and teaching, it must be coupled with a call to discipleship and the training for discipleship. Leaders must spend time with people so that they can help to mature in the faith. They must model and demonstrate Christian living, not just teach “about it.”



God expects every Christian to be an actively involved disciple. Look at how Christians are described in **1 Peter 2:9**, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*

It is very important that we do not forget who we are and what God has called us to be. Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”*

10. Describe how discipleship ought to take place in the church today.

Digging Deeper



1. Read Mark 1:35. What is Jesus doing and why? Note any important details that you can.
2. Read Matthew 6:6. What does Jesus expect from us?
3. Why would one of the disciples of Jesus ask the question that he did in Luke 11:1?
4. **Memorise** Psalm 1:1-3.
5. How can we help each other in the development of our personal devotional lives?