



SESSION 5

THE COST OF A DISCIPLE

Following Jesus will require sacrifice.



WORSHIP

READING PLAN

Read through the following Scripture passages this week. Use the space provided to record your thoughts and responses.

Day 1

Matthew 10:16-39

Day 2

Matthew 24:1-27

Day 3

Luke 14:25-35

Day 4

John 16:1-33

Day 5

Philippians 1:12-30

Day 6

Philippians 3:1-21

Day 7

2 Timothy 3:1-17

FOUR TRUTHS

Go even deeper into the text this week as you study four primary truths found in Luke 9:23-26. Reread the passage and the “Unpack the Story” section to familiarize yourself with the text.

1. We are not exempt. Trials are part of life. They come to Christians and non-Christians alike. But in Christ we approach trials differently. Instead of being shocked or caught off guard by trials, we anticipate them, knowing that through Christ we can overcome any trial we face (see Rom. 8:37). In fact, as we see trials in our lives from God’s perspective, we realize that every problem we face is another opportunity to trust God and mature as a follower of Jesus. Through them, God is producing in us patience, endurance, strength, character, hope, and faith. Just as weights in a gym break down muscles only to make them stronger, the struggles of life serve to make us stronger as we put our whole weight down on God’s promises and trust Jesus to carry us through.

³ Not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. ⁵ This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

ROMANS 5:3-5

What do these verses tell us about the trials God allows to come into the life of every believer?

2. We must deny ourselves. Denying ourselves is a call to godly and holy living. When we deny our natural desire to sin in order to please God, then we are living a life that honors Christ.

Jesus encountered three men who wanted to follow Him, but each man had an excuse. Read this account in Luke 9:57-62 and answer the following questions.

In what way was each man unwilling to deny himself and follow Jesus?

What areas of your life would have to be put away for you to follow Jesus completely?

3. We are to take up our cross daily. Karen Watson was a missionary in Iraq. She was killed with four other missionaries on March 15, 2004. This is a portion of a letter she sent home to be read on her death.

Dear Pastor Phil and Pastor Roger,

You should only be opening this letter in the event of my death. When God calls there are no regrets. I tried to share my heart with you as much as possible, my heart for the Nations. I wasn't called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory was my reward, His glory is my reward. ... I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience. Some of my favorite Scriptures are: Isaiah 6, you know the one. Second Corinthians 5:15-21, 1 Peter 1:3, Colossians 4:2-6, Romans 15:20, Psalms 25 and 27. You can look through my Scofield and see where it is marked. Please use only what you want or feel best. There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him. I love you two and my church family.

In His care, Salaam,
Karen¹

In what ways does Karen's example challenge you?

4. We are called to follow Jesus. Consider the benefits of following Christ in the midst of trial.

² Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

JAMES 1:2-4

Think of a person you know who has walked through suffering and hardship and continued to follow Jesus. What does his or her story teach you concerning what to do when persecuted?

1. As quoted in Andy Cook, "Sermon: Fine-tune Your Focus: 2 Corinthians 4." June 29, 2007. Available at lifeway.com. Accessed May 1, 2015.



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

We have already seen that part of following Jesus is self-denial. Most of our time is taken up satisfying ourselves as quickly as possible with the things we want. In what ways have you practiced self-denial lately?

Think about ways you can deny yourself and exalt Jesus. Maybe you could deny your urge to be first and let someone else go ahead of you. You might deny the urge to eat and use your lunch break to fast and pray. You could even deny the urge to entertain yourself. Instead of watching TV or going to a movie, spend time visiting someone in the hospital.

Ask God to show you the areas in your life where He wants you to practice self-denial, and then record your thoughts in response to the following questions.

What message does our culture send about personal happiness?

How does this influence your thinking or distract you from denying yourself and exalting God?

What are your hardest urges to deny? How have you overcome these urges in the past?

List five practical ways you can demonstrate self-denial to others. These may be people you're close to or people you've never met before.

As you have worked through this session, you may be walking through a season of hardship and trial in your own life. During these times it's important to draw close to the Lord and lean wholly on His promises and presence. Below are some promises God gives to those going through trials. Study each one and write down the promise. Which stands out to you? Who can you share these promises with this week?

Psalm 34:18

Isaiah 43:1-2

1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Hebrews 13:5

James 1:12