

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Study Series: Rediscovering Discipleship
Lesson 2 - Jesus' Requirement for Discipleship

Wednesday, August 31, 2022
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Summary of What it Means to Be a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

1. Being a disciple starts with accepting Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the Cross as the only way to receive forgiveness of sin, obtain righteousness and eternal salvation. John 3:16, Acts 4:12
2. Being a disciple is to abandon our former way of life and follow Jesus. *Matthew 4:19 – “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” NKJV*
3. To be a disciple is to be devoted to learning from and following the way of the master. *1 Peter 2:21 “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*
4. To learn to live in a loving relationship in a community of other believers. *John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” NKJV*
5. To become a full partner with Christ (energized by the Holy Spirit) in fulfilling the Great Commission. Matthew 28:16–20

Jesus' Three clear demands for Discipleship

Let's look at what Jesus has to say about His requirement for His disciples. In Luke 9:23-26, Jesus makes three clear demands on anyone who wants to become a disciple. The demands are specific and unambiguous. You either take them or leave them. They are a must for anyone who wants to follow Jesus as a disciple

“Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? 26 Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Luke 9:23-26 (NKJV)

Here are the three clear demands Jesus makes on anyone who wants to be a disciple.

1. Must deny themselves.
2. Take up their cross daily.
3. Follow me.

Discussion Questions

1. *Discuss what each of these demand mean*
2. *What does Jesus mean by losing your life to save it in verse 24?*
3. *Why do you think this concept is difficult to understand and practice by many people?*

Denial of Self

The Greek verb translated here as “to deny” is *aparneomai*. Although this word can simply mean to deny the truth of a statement, it almost always has overtones of association or connection to a person. Denial in the New Testament is the intentional disassociation from a relationship with a particular person. Another translation might be to “disown” or “renounce.” For example, this is the verb used when Peter “denies” Jesus. He denies that he knows Jesus or has any association with him.

Self-denial, then, is intentional disowning of the self, or stepping away from relationship with the self as primary. Jesus is not making a statement about whether the self is bad, but about who we are most closely associated with. Who is our primary allegiance to—Him, or ourselves?

The call to be a disciple is a call to deny self – to no longer live for ourselves.

2 Corinthians 5:15 “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

The call to deny self goes beyond abandoning a life of sin. While it is true that sin is a product of self, self is much more than sin, it is stubborn or willful adherence to one's own desires or ideas. *“Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23 (NLT)*

Dying to self does not mean self-mutilation or self-punishment. It means surrendering our own will to His will. The will of Jesus becomes more important than my will and His desires more important than my desires.

Taking up Your Cross Daily

Let's begin with what Jesus didn't mean. Many people interpret “cross” as some burden they must carry in their lives: a strained relationship, a thankless job, a physical illness. With self-pitying pride, they say, “That's my cross I have to carry.” These are not what Jesus meant when He said, “take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Remember, Jesus made this statement about taking up one's cross before he was crucified. Although the metaphor would certainly gain a fuller meaning after his death, it must have meant something to his listeners beforehand as well.

At the time of the New Testament, crucifixion was reserved specifically for offenders who had rebelled against authority. To “take up one's cross” referred to the practice of forcing a condemned person to carry the cross beam to his execution site. This showed that although he had rebelled against authority, the condemned person was now so completely conquered that his last act in life would be to carry the instrument of his demise to the place of his death. It was a show of complete and utter submission. A call to bear one's cross as part of following Jesus, then, is a call to be as submitted to Christ as the condemned criminal was to his death.

Therefore, when Jesus calls for self-denial and cross-bearing, he's claiming authority. Following Christ means disowning the self and giving allegiance to Him instead. And it means giving him allegiance down to the very depths of our being.

Follow Him

Our modern-day definition of "following someone" is very different from what it was two thousand years ago, especially in the western world. Today, to follow someone is to be their fan, follow them on social media, like their post, buy their memorabilia, etc.

When we turn our attention to what the Bible shows us about how to follow Jesus in our daily life, two things stand out immediately: understanding and obeying his teaching and following his example. Of course, we already learned that following His example is impossible without denial of self and carrying our cross. Denial of self is necessary because the teachings of Jesus run contrary to the desires of our flesh. Carrying the cross is necessary because the teachings of Jesus run contrary to the world's system.

1 Peter 2:21 - To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.