

**Matthew 16:24-26:** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?"

**Intro:** Last week, we saw Jesus turn the minds of His disciples to His work. Peter declared His Person, next Jesus declared His work. We also saw that Peter & the disciples had a lot more to learn about their King! Jesus would be a suffering King, & Peter had trouble understanding this, rejected it, and got a stern rebuke from Jesus. We've got to get Jesus' Person & work right according to the Bible to faithfully preach Him! Today, we see Jesus tell His disciples that if they would truly follow Him, they must give Him their full commitment, allegiance, and loyalty and follow Him in His sufferings. The way up is the way down first; The way to glory is humiliation first; The way to true life is death first! The way to find true, lasting, satisfying, joyful life is to lose your life, first.

**Jesus teaches us today that we must follow His path: Philippians 2:7-11:** [Jesus] made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus calls everyone who would follow Him to make themselves nothing (self-denial) & take up their cross (die to self), and follow Him. We must follow His path, which is the path of greatest love: **GOSPEL!**

- **Martin Luther:** God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.

- **Spurgeon:** I have now concentrated all my prayers into one, & that one prayer is this, that I may die to self, and live wholly to Him.

- **John Piper:** The way to think about self-denial is to deny yourself only a lesser good for a greater good.

### **1. Jesus Calls His Disciples To Deny Themselves**

**Matthew 16:24:** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself"

**a. Jesus had just warned Peter about the Satanic danger of setting his mind on the things of men and not on the things of God: Matthew 16:23:** But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

**b. To constantly and consistently set our minds on the things of God and not on the things of man, we must deny ourselves:** What does it mean to deny? It means to disown; to say "I don't know you"; to having nothing to do with someone/something; It means to renounce commitment, allegiance, and loyalty to something or someone.

"Deny" in verse 24 is the same word used of what Jesus warned Peter that he would do to Him: **Matthew 26:34:** Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

**Matthew 26:72:** he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."

When Peter was denying Jesus, he was denying that he knew Jesus, he was denying that he had anything to do with Jesus, he didn't listen to Jesus, he didn't follow Jesus, he wasn't committed to Jesus, he gave no allegiance to Jesus, & showed Jesus no loyalty at all!

So when we deny ourselves, we are saying: I do not know Joseph, I have nothing to do with Joseph, I don't listen to Joseph, I don't follow Joseph, I'm not committed to Joseph, I give no allegiance to Joseph, & I show no allegiance to Joseph at all! I have utterly & unchangeably transferred my commitment, loyalty, & allegiance over to another. Namely, my LORD and Savior Jesus Christ!

**c. Jesus must be first: Matthew 10:37-39:** Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, & whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. & whoever does not take his cross & follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Whoever loves self more than Jesus isn't worthy of Him-He must be our first love-more than family/more than self

**d. Self denial is the opposite of self-esteem: Author (Biblical Counseling Foundation):** The wisdom of this world deceptively teaches that believing in the inherent goodness of one's "self" is foundational to a fulfilled life . . . Scripture teaches that a fulfilled life is not dependent of having a "good self-image" or a "higher self-esteem." Instead, fulfillment in living depends on your relationship to God & a biblical response to the problem of "self."

**Acts 20:24:** But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- **Lane:** The center of your life changes from a concern for self to a reckless abandon to the will of God.

- **Al Martin:** The cross does not give us a minor shift or two with regard to a few of our ethical & moral & religious values. The cross radically disrupts the very center & citadel of your life from self to Christ. And if the cross has not done that, you're not a Christian! My friend face it! You're not a Christian! Until the cross has radically disrupted the very center & citadel of your life, & brought you from a life of commitment to serve self - whether it's [self-righteous] religious self, moral self, covetous self, lustful self, proud self, unforgiving self, lazy self - it doesn't matter what are the focal points of the reign of your self. If you've gone to the cross in union with Christ it's been shattered! There's a new King!

**To deny yourself is to deny everything in you that is opposed to God and His will because Jesus is better!**

**Betty S. Stam:** Lord, I give up all my own plans & purposes; All my own desires & hopes & accept Your will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to You to be Yours forever. Fill me & seal me with Your Holy Spirit; Use me as You will, send me where You will & work out Your whole will in my life at any cost now & forever.

## **2. Jesus Calls His Disciples To Take Up Their Cross**

**M 16:24:** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself & take up his cross"

We can easily forget what the cross is: it's been made a nice, clean, religious symbol; put it on jewelry; speak of it as a trial "my next door neighbor is my cross to bear". What was the cross in Jesus' day? It was the most gruesome, painful, tortuous way of executing the most evil criminals. They wanted cruel and unusual punishment! It's like saying take up your electric chair, your gas chamber, your lethal injection (but worse – like a curse word!)

- **Theologian:** When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

- **Spurgeon:** You cannot be Christ's servant if you are not willing to follow Him, cross and all. What do you crave? A crown? Then it must be a crown of thorns if you are to be like Him. Do you want to be lifted up? So you shall, but it will be upon a cross.

- **Author:** When you are forgotten or neglected or purposely considered as nothing, and you sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ: that is dying to self.

When what you do that's good is spoken of as evil, & you love the person anyway & don't even defend yourself: that is dying to self.

When wishes or desires go unfulfilled & you trust that God's plan is better & hope in Him: that is dying to self.

When your advice is disregarded, your opinions are ridiculed, but you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, but take it all in patient, loving silence: that is dying to self.

When you lovingly & patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, or any annoyance and endure it as Jesus endured it: that is dying to self.

When you are content with unpleasant circumstances or situations or any interruption by the will of God: that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown: that is dying to self.

When you see others prosper & have their needs met & can honestly rejoice with them in spirit & feel no envy nor question God, while your own needs are far greater & in desperate circumstances: that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction & reproof from one of less stature than yourself, when you can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart: that is dying to self.

When you speak up for Jesus in a hard situation or any situation: that is dying to self: **Sister Tanya Waite:** She told a Muslim woman at Ted's funeral: "Honey, Jesus is the only way you can be saved."

### **3. Jesus Calls His Disciples To Follow Him**

**Matthew 16:24:** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

**Jesus said follow Me!** Oh what a great "Me" we get to follow! He's the Me of me's! Jesus came preaching powerfully like no other; Jesus healed the sick; He cast out demons; He cleansed lepers; He forgave sins; He made the lame walk; He healed the withered hand; He calmed the storm; He called Himself the Bridegroom; He raised the dead; He fed thousands of people bread that He Himself created as the Good Shepherd; He opened deaf ears and blind eyes! He is the Christ, the Son of the living God!

We follow Jesus by trusting Him; By desiring to be with Him; By listening to Him; By obeying Him; By communing with Him; By enjoying Him; By worshiping Him as the God-Man; & by willingly suffering for Him!

### **4. Jesus Calls His Disciples To Lose Their Lives**

**Matthew 16:25:** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

If you have your best life now, you will lose your life forever in hell. To find your life, you must lose it first!

**Jesus told a parable once about a man who had his best life now: Luke 12:16-21:** And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, & he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' & he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns & build larger ones, & there I will store all my grain & my goods. & I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, & the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself & is not rich toward God."

If you deny yourself, trust Jesus, and make sacrifices for Jesus now (possibly even your own physical life!), He will reward you with abundant life now (living for Him and being satisfied in Him) and eternal life in the age to come where there will be fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!

**Mark 10:28-30:** Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." <sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

**Daniel Doriani:** Some people exert every effort to “find” life – to preserve and prolong natural life however they can. By contrast, Jesus commends those who are slightly careless for his sake . . . Those who live for self die twice and may never even live once. Those who die to self, die once and live twice, now and forever.

The end goal is to save your life! Jesus doesn't teach self-denial for self-denial's sake! But you deny yourself a lesser good for a greater good! Life! **Life:** Physical life and everything most precious to you in this physical life.

Verse 25 confirms and further explains what Jesus taught in verse 24. See these verses are connected by “For”

**Matt. 16:24-25:** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself & take up his cross & follow me.<sup>25</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake **will find it.**

To find your life in v. 25 is the opposite of what Jesus called for in v. 24 – denying yourself and taking up your cross and following Him. To lose your life in v. 25 is what Jesus calls for in v. 24 (self-denial). And the goal is to find your life. And that's what coming to Jesus gets you – a found life! The best life! The most abundant life!

**Philippians 3:7-8:** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

**Jim Elliot:** He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

### **5. One Human Soul Is Worth More Than The Whole World**

**Matthew 16:26:** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

How is it good for you if you gain the whole world (all the riches of this world; all the pleasures of this world; all the praise & honor of this world; all the success of this world; all the stuff of this world: houses, cars, vacations, money, phones, toys, clothes, jewelry, everything!; all the relationships of this world; the whole world!) and enjoy it all to the max for 120 years, and then die and go to hell for ever & ever & ever!

**Life:** Your soul; Eternal, abundant life now and in the world to come; the inner man destined for heaven or hell.

The only way your soul can be saved is by faith in Jesus Christ – by coming after Him – by following Him. Is there anything in this world you would like to possess more than Christ? If you could have all this world, would you give up Christ? **Glory** – you could be the most famous person in the world in your field; **Girls** (relationships) – you could have all the supermodels as your wives or the best husband or children or just be married; **Gold** – Riches and Stuff – millions! Or will you say with the Psalmist in **Psalm 73:25 (Read *Desiring God*, 275-278)**

### **Jesus Is The King Of Self Denial Who Endured The Hardest Trial To Win God's Everlasting Smile!**

Jesus calls for self denial  
More self-esteem is not His style  
In your own heart you'll find what's vile  
He'll rip it out and make a pile  
Against this heap you'll be hostile  
You'll come away from self awhile  
And “Christ is all!” will be your smile  
Since you, to God, He'd reconcile  
When on that cross He faced God's trial  
And rose all glories to compile  
For in His soul was found no guile!

To take up your cross means death to self by execution  
That cross was Rome's death tool – a cruel institution  
Much worse than our chair of death by sudden electrocution  
Or the dreaded guillotine of the French Revolution  
Death to sin and self must be our holy resolution  
Christ died the greatest death to end sin's dark pollution  
On His cross He took God's wrath – our penal substitution  
To all sin, death, and pain – He's this world's only solution!

Jesus' call is to follow Me  
Oh may God grant you eyes to see  
The greatness of this One in Three  
Who took our sin upon that tree  
And then rose up to set us free  
He truly is the Me of me's  
And all God's wrath He did appease  
And now salvation guarantees  
To joy and life He holds the keys  
So bow to Him on bended knees!

If you lose your life for Jesus' sake  
You'll save your life – make no mistake  
He's worthy all else to forsake  
He'll give you joy no trial can break  
Consider your choice and what's at stake  
Heaven and Hell – the fiery lake  
Believe in Him – His mercy take  
And from the dead you'll rise awake!

If you gain all riches and this world whole  
There is no profit if you lose your soul  
Owning all this world is an empty goal  
Since hell's your payment – death's your toll  
So come to Christ, He'll make you whole  
For He alone can satisfy your soul!

Christ Jesus Is Our Greatest Gain  
To Come To Him He Has Made Plain  
We Must Deny Ourselves So Vain  
And Die Like Him, Like Little Grain  
Once Planted Dies But Springs With Rain  
One Soul's Worth More Than Worldly Fame  
And All You Ever Could Attain  
Christ Will Repay And Come And Claim

His Children Who Make Him Their Aim  
For He Lay Dead, Was Cursed And Slain  
He Bore God's Wrath And Took Our Shame  
Then Rose Alive To Rule And Reign  
And Set Our Hearts For Him Aflame  
Our Lives, Our Souls He Does Sustain  
For Him We'll Suffer Any Pain  
He Gave Us Life, Broke Every Chain  
Now When We Die There's Only Gain!