

The Road to Calvary Lesson 7

Take Up Your Cross

A Bible Study Lesson of the Mount Zion Church

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We Have the Vision to be a LEARNING Church!



**Introduction:** The following lesson is intended to challenge students to consider the commitment required to be one of Jesus’ followers. Commitment to the Lord’s work must be understood as intentional and sacrificial. It requires that we die daily to our desires and take up our cross for the work of discipleship. By analyzing three scenes related to the Crucifixion of Jesus, students will be able to determine their level of what changes they need to make to ensure that Christ will be pleased. Our example of commitment can be seen in Jesus as He endured the ups and downs of ministry, yet He did not waver in His attention to why He was here and what He was purposed to do. Enjoy this lesson and Take Up Your Cross!



#### Key Verse

- Mark 8: 34

#### Supporting Verses

- Luke 22: 54-62
- Matthew 26: 39 and 42

### I. The Command to Self-Denial—Mark 8: 34

When Jesus commands those who want to be His disciples to self-denial, He makes an analogy to the idea of picking up the cross. This phrase has often been misunderstood and misused by people to gain sympathy and elicit sorrow from those to whom they speak. You have heard people say, “I’m just bearing my cross.” as they speak about the difficult conditions of their lives. Unfortunately, this thinking is 100% inaccurate relative to what Jesus meant. Let us analyze the phrase and see its context so that we can understand the commitment that Jesus requires.

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

- Is there choice in being a disciple of Jesus? Where in the verse do we see the choice?

This is important because becoming a disciple of Jesus is not something that is forced upon a person. The choice is for “whoever” and the choice is a “want” that a person comes to based upon their belief and faith in Jesus. Therefore, anything that is “our cross” must first be something we choose. None of us chooses sickness, bad relationships, loss of job, etc. These life burdens are conditions, but they are not choices and as such do not qualify as “our cross to bear”.

The cross Jesus offers is identified in a key word. DISCIPLE.

What is a DISCIPLE? \_\_\_\_\_

Hint! Jesus says it in the last half of the sentence. A disciple is one who follows and learns. Therefore, when we take up our cross (not physical) we are behaving like Jesus did.

How did Jesus behave? Can you list a few ways that Jesus behaved while alive?

Jesus Did....

If I am following Him, then I must do the same. I may want to do something differently, but Jesus said deny yourself.

How can we deny ourselves and follow Christ daily? Jot a few ideas in the space below.

I Can Deny Myself by...

## II. Non-Example of Commitment—Luke 22: 54-62

Most are familiar with Peter’s denial of Christ. Yet, many may not realize that the denial is an issue of commitment to Jesus in the face of adversity. The three times Peter was identified as one of Jesus’ disciples represent opportunities for boldness.

What caused Peter to deny Jesus? Fear! Peter’s fear related to the potential response of the Jews who had taken Jesus and could jail or even kill him. Those in the courtyard recognized Peter as one of the disciples in a similar manner that people who have seen your work as a Christian know you. But, when faced with standing alone for Jesus or the threat of ridicule or even physical harm, do you boldly proclaim we are His? When you see ungodly behavior, do you stand up or do you cower.

When you hear people in ungodly conversations do you stand there and laugh or do you stand up? The instances where we can stand boldly are the moments of showing we are committed to Jesus more than we are committed to the world.



In that moment, Peter chose to put down His cross and choose self-preservation over a commitment to Christ.

The reality we must accept is that standing for Jesus may place us in positions where people will not like what we have said, support how we live, understand why we do not go along with the status quo, or even accept why we say no to some things we see in society.

We are called to this type of commitment and Peter’s non-example should serve as a pattern we work hard to never repeat. Jesus said take up the cross daily and follow. He did not say take up a convenient cross and follow when it suits us.

### III. Commitment Versus Comfort—Matthew 26: 39 and 42

In Matthew 26: 39 and 42, we can analyze how Jesus models commitment. Matthew records three times of prayer, but two different prayers. (The third prayer was the same as the second prayer. See verse 44)

What does Jesus say in each prayer?

Prayer 1:


Prayer 2:


As we compare the two, we can see evidence that Jesus requested permission to avoid the suffering that was to come. He prayed that if there was some other way for salvation to come He would prefer that option over the immense pain and

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*Jesus asked for Option B!  
When told no, Jesus  
submitted to God's will!*

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separation from God he would need to endure. Jesus asked for option B! We must understand that God does not have a problem with us asking Him questions about our lives. God has never responded to people with the side eye when people ask what His will is for their lives. Our request of “Do I need to do this, Lord?” or “Do you want me to do that, Lord?” is never the problem. The problem is when we do not follow the answer He gives. When the answer comes back, Option A, we are commanded to do His will and choose A even when suffering may be involved. Remember, Jesus said, you must deny yourself!

Notice, in the second prayer, Jesus says, “If it is not possible for this cup to be taken away, then your will be done.” In other words, I will submit myself (deny self) and do it the way the Lord want things done. Knowing what He would face, Jesus models how far we are expected to go as His disciples. As He prays and says

yes to the will of God, Luke 22: 43 records that He is strengthened by an angel of The Lord. In short, Jesus submits to the will of God and God in turn gives Him everything He needs to handle what is to come. This amazing promise shows us that our commitment to Christ is never left without a response from Him. We can be encouraged that He will bolster our resolve and give us the spiritual and physical resources to do exactly what He has requested of us. The full pattern is to deny yourself, follow Him and watch Jesus help you succeed in doing His will! What an amazing promise from the Lord

**In Conclusion:** How often have you known the will of God for your life, yet chosen the easy route of doing your own thing? The example of Jesus' commitment is not the nice and pretty picture of ministry. This example is one where our savior went all the way to the finished line for us. He commands us to do the same. If you and I genuinely want to be His disciples, we must deny ourselves, take up the cross of responsibility, and pattern ourselves after the way of Jesus!

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for your commitment to your mission. I am a beneficiary of that commitment and now have eternal life because of what you did. Please help me to deny myself when it is not convenient. Help me to take up my cross of commitment daily even when it is not comfortable. Help me to follow you even when it is costly. Amen!