

# FOR CHRIST'S AGENDA

*“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’.”*  
—MATTHEW 16:24

Jesus said in order to follow Him we must deny ourselves. The idea of self-denial is largely misunderstood today. It is not deliberately making life difficult and uncomfortable in the hopes of impressing God. Many little heroic acts like sleeping on a wooden plank instead of a mattress or giving up ice cream for a month may be character building, but do nothing to further our standing with God.

To deny ourselves is to render what happens to us as completely unimportant in the process of serving God. Jesus took the stance, “If to fulfill the will of my Father, I am to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, then suffer many things, I will. If it means I am to die on a Roman cross, then die on a Roman cross, I will.” In denying ourselves, we die to our own agendas and live for the agenda of God, regardless of consequences to ourselves.

Many people also misconstrue what Jesus meant by ‘taking up our cross’. It doesn’t mean coping with unavoidable problems in life. “Well, I guess my arthritis is my cross to bear’ or ‘that delinquent son of mine is my cross to bear.” The cross in the life of Jesus was not a demonstration in how to act under pressure, but was the ultimate in His obedience to His Father. We know Jesus went willingly to the cross, but He didn’t waltz to it. The night of His arrest, He prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done” (Matthew 26:42). It was in great anguish Jesus went, but

the cross in His life was total obedience to His Father's will, and He remained obedient, even to death on a cross.

Whether we live a life of relative ease or one of hardship and sacrifice is not the issue. There is no virtue in ease, nor in sacrifice or martyrdom for its own sake, but there is virtue in wanting the will of God in our lives, no matter how tough it may be. It is saying, "Lord, through thick and thin your will be done. Through ease and hardship your will be done. When it breaks my heart, your will be done." The issue is in willingly submitting ourselves to Christ's agenda, and living in obedience to Him, regardless of where that will take us.

***PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray for your agenda in my life. Help me to completely submit to your will, regardless of consequences to me. Thank You, Lord.***

***TO REFLECT UPON: How can I best overcome any hesitancy in submitting to God's will for my life?***