

## THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE

Welcome to **Week 3** of the **Word Made Flesh**. For those who are new to Vertical Church we are in the NT portion of our Through The Bible journey that we started back in February and we are currently in the process of making our way through the Gospels of **Matthew, Mark, Luke** and **John**.

Before we jump into our text this morning I want to take a moment to address why the Bible has 4 Gospel accounts concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. A common practice of those who try to discredit the Bible is that they like to use the differences between the 4 Gospel as proof that the Bible is somehow the creation of men. Their argument being that if God really was the author then there would not be contradictions and discrepancies among the four accounts. However, this is a flawed argument because it makes the assumption that the perspective of each Gospel is to be the same or from the same viewpoint. The reality is that this was never meant to be the case. The reason there are four Gospels is that each Gospel is targeting a different audience therefore the subject matter of each Gospel is different from the others based on the intended audience. The facts are all true; it's just that one Gospel might focus on one particular aspect of an event while another Gospel might focus on something different at the same event.

For example, Matthew's Gospel was addressed to Jews with the purpose of showing them that Jesus is the true King and the one promised by the prophets of the OT. Therefore, he focuses on details that would appeal more to the Jewish audience. Mark and Luke's Gospel were targeted to a more non-Jewish audience. Mark focuses on Jesus in His humanity as a suffering servant while Luke focuses on the ministry of Jesus to outcasts showing the compassion He has for the spiritually wayward no matter who they are. John's Gospel focuses more on the salvation from sin aspect of Jesus' ministry including details not mentioned by the other accounts. They should not be seen as contradictory but as complementary to one another. Each Gospel account just happens to focus on a different aspect of Jesus and His ministry with different audiences in mind. Taken collectively they give us a more fuller picture of who Jesus is and why He came to earth. So as we continue through these Gospels over the next few weeks we are going to be looking at different aspects of Jesus and His ministry with the soul intent of helping you become a more faithful disciple of Jesus.

In **Week 1** we started with **John 1** where we addressed the divine nature of Jesus as the Messiah. Yes Jesus was HUMAN, born of flesh and blood, but He was also DIVINE meaning He had no beginning or ending because He is also God in the flesh. Last week in **Week 2** we took a look at Jesus' most famous sermon, **The Sermon On The Mount**, found in **Matthew 5 through 7** where Jesus challenges His disciples with the ATTITUDES we all must have if we are to be SALT and LIGHT on earth and make a difference in this world. We said that if we are going to achieve these ATTITUDES (attitudes of Humility, Meekness, Righteousness, Mercy, Purity and Peacemaker) we cannot achieve them by adhering to a list of Commands or LAWS.

We cannot muster them up by just trying harder. **These attitudes are only possible if we are willing to allow God's Holy Spirit to transform our heart.** As a disciple of Christ we must allow Jesus Himself to make a great exchange; an exchange where We give Him our heart of sin and He gives us His heart of righteousness. This is in essence what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. And so today we are going to look at how we practically do that by looking at **THREE COMMITMENTS a DISCIPLE of JESUS must make in order to have a spiritually transformed heart.** So if you will find **Luke 9** I am going to **PRAY** for us and then we will dive in.

As we come to **Luke Ch. 9** Jesus has been walking with his disciples for some time up to this point. He has been preaching life transforming sermons in various places in and around Galilee. He has been performing miracles of healing (casting out demons, healing Peter's mother-in-law, cleansing leprosy, healing paralytics and even raising the dead). He has even been hanging out with sinners and tax collectors thus drawing criticism from the Pharisees. As the chapter begins Jesus is preparing His disciples for His soon departure back to the Father by sending his disciples out to practice doing ministry without Him. Upon their return Jesus tries to retreat with them to talk about what they did and about what they learned along the way, but the multitudes who had been impacted by their ministry and the ministry of Jesus found them hiding in private and disrupted the party. After preaching to the crowd, feeding them by performing a miracle using some loaves of bread and a few small fish and then sending everyone home, Jesus drills down on what it really means to be a disciple and He starts the conversation by first asking Peter, *"Who do the people say that I am?"* Of course Peter gives all kinds of responses. *"Some say you are John the Baptist, some say Elijah and others say you are one of the prophets of old."* And then Jesus asked Peter specifically, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter responds with a statement that could only be revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. (btw, without the Holy Spirit I cannot convince you that Jesus is who He says He is. You can read it for yourself, but if the Holy Spirit doesn't reveal it to you, you will not accept it. There are just some things about God that the Holy Spirit has to reveal to us, and who Jesus actually happens to be is certainly one of them) Peter says, *"You are the Christ,"* which means Jesus, you are the promised Messiah come from God in whom our salvation is secured. And while that is a very important statement we all must be willing to make and believe in. And while it is a simple statement that anyone can make. We need to understand that if we are going to follow Jesus the Christ, more is required of us than just a confession with our mouth that Jesus is LORD. And that is what I want us to see this morning. Look with me at what Jesus says to Peter next.

**Luke 9:21-23 (NIV) 21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.** That seems a little odd! I thought this was good news. Why does Jesus want it to be kept secret? I thought we were supposed to tell people about Jesus?!? Well here is what we need to know. Publicity at this point in the redemption plan might become a hindrance to the mission and divert public attention from the real message and purpose behind the cross. Remember, the people were looking more for a military Messiah to free them from Roman control more than they were a Savior who would deliver them from their sin. If there was an uprising to keep Jesus from being executed on the cross this would obviously become a huge distraction from what He must accomplish. (Remember how Peter responded when they came to arrest Jesus in the garden.

He was ready to fight and keep the temple guards from taking Jesus) Can you imagine if hundreds of people start doing what Peter did, ignorant of who Jesus really was and trying to protect Jesus thinking that a revolt against Rome was about to happen? The cross would not have happened and the whole uprising would become a distraction to the real reason Jesus came to earth in the first place. Jesus continues to reveal to His disciples what is about to happen to Him.

**22** And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” **23** Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple.....

Let’s push pause here for a second. Profession that Jesus is Lord and Savior is very important! But there is more we need to understand if we are going to follow Jesus faithfully as a disciple! There is more to it if you really want a spiritually transformed heart that a disciple must have in order to be SALT and LIGHT in our world. And here it is:

**23** Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must and then Jesus lists three commitments: deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. These are the THREE COMMITMENTS we must be willing to make if we want a spiritually transformed heart. Let’s take a look at each of them individually.

### **Commitment #1 - A disciple must consistently DENY SELF**

Self-denial was a common theme in the teaching of Jesus. But it is important to note that what Jesus is calling us to here is not some reclusive or repressive type of self-discipline for the sake of making ourselves look religious, like becoming a monk in a monastery separating ourselves from the outside world. Instead, He is calling us to deny ourselves the selfish desires that feed our fleshly appetites and lead us into sinful behavior because He wants us to engage the world we live in without the world becoming a distraction and hindering our witness. Ultimately, if we are going to willfully submit to God we must practice self-denial so that our fleshly appetites do not compete or override our desire to follow Jesus. Much of the struggle you have in following Jesus boils down to whether or not you are willing to deny yourself. This discipline is needed so that we can still engage the culture we live in with the Gospel rather than removing ourselves completely from it.

**Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)** **11** For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. **12** It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, **13** while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, **14** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Bottom line: we are to eliminate the things from our lives that Jesus has saved us from and as we wait for Him to come again we now seek to live a life that shows we belong to Jesus as we are now eager to do what is good and godly becoming a witness to His redeeming power in our lifetime.

The attitude we must have is the one Paul describes in **Galatian 2:20 (NIV)** **20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** The idea is that I am no longer going to live for me but I am now going to live for Jesus. And here is why we must consistently deny self ? **Romans 8:7-8 (NIV)** **7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.** My selfish heart constantly wants to be about me. Therefore, I must be willing to deny that so that I can follow God rather than fight against Him especially if I say that Jesus is Lord and I WANT to follow Him. I must strive to be consistent in this process and never let up because my flesh will never let up until this old body of mine is planted in the grave.

**Commitment #1 - A disciple must consistently DENY SELF**

**Commitment #2 - A disciple must commit to CARRYING their CROSS daily**

The CROSS was a symbol of death and finality in the Roman culture of Jesus' day. When someone took up a cross, he never came back. It was a one way journey and it was final. If we are going to follow Jesus and we are serious about it, ours should be a one way journey as well. No turning back because it is final, I belong and am committed to Jesus.

Notice Jesus says the cross we are to take up for Him is to be DAILY. This is a daily commitment. Day by day and moment by moment. Following Jesus is more than just acknowledging His existence or accepting His teaching. Following Jesus means we are willing to walk in His footsteps. It means we are willing to take upon ourselves His purpose and His mission in the world and we must revisit that commitment each day. It isn't a one time decision and then forget it. It is to be a daily effort and decision just like your relationship with the people in your life. I need to choose to love my wife each day. I need to tell her that every day. I need to show her that every day. If I don't, the love and relationship we have will grow cold and feel distant and even non-existent. When I take up my cross daily it means I am committed to Him because of my love for God and for people.

The CROSS is also a symbol of victory over sin. It is that which leads to joy, peace and power over sin but we must also be reminded that these benefits were only made possible through suffering. Sometimes we may have to suffer in order to bring that joy, peace and power to others. We cannot let complacency or comfort get in the way of bringing salvation and victory to those who need it. It is not that we want to suffer or that we even enjoy it. It's just that we love God more and we consider our only life purpose to be in serving Him.

**Galatians 6:12-14 (NIV)** **Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.** The religious people of Jesus' day were more motivated by religious pride and impressing people with their outward religious activity than they were with what was right and pleasing to God. Their personal well being was more important than what would truly honor God. **14 May I never boast except in the**

cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Unlike religious leaders of his day who were still consumed with selfish ambition, Paul by his declaration in Verse 14 wants to be identified with the sacrifice that Jesus made by making sure that he is dead to the lusts of this world. He is ok if the world rejects him as long as it is a result of his identity with Jesus and His cross.

Following Jesus may mean that others reject you as Jesus was rejected. Following Jesus may mean you have to pay a price so that others may be able to hear about Jesus as Paul and the other disciples had to endure. Ultimately you must be willing to put your life on the line for Him because ultimately we are now under His authority and we are committed to a relationship with Him because He put His life on the line for us. If the decisions we make only revolve around how something will impact us most of the time we will make decisions with a selfish motive and this will lead to a corrupt life. If you are going to follow Jesus the only way you can make sure that you will live a life that will honor God is to be willing to do as Paul did, live a life that identifies with the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf.

**A disciple must commit to CARRYING their CROSS daily. A disciple must consistently DENY SELF. And that brings us to;**

### **Commitment #3 - A disciple must continually keep their EYES ON JESUS**

One of the beautiful things about Jesus' life as outlined for us in the Gospel accounts is that it gives us a pattern for life. We are not just called to a bunch of rules and regulations written down for us in a sacred book, but we have been given the example of a person (flesh and blood) who lived it out the way it was intended to be lived out (Remember, He is the WORD made FLESH). That is the beauty of Jesus and his incarnational ministry. He takes the word of God and translates it into a life lived out among us. And guess what? He wants our life to do the same thing for those who do not know Jesus. Jesus wants to use your life to show others His love, grace and mercy. The way we live should be a reflection of Him. But this is only possible if we keep our eyes on Him continually. If you have any doubt about what God desires for your life just look to Jesus. Not only do we have the blueprint, we have also been given the power to achieve it through the Holy Spirit who desires to live in and through us.

**Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus is our example! So let's look to HIM! Notice the remainder of what Jesus says to His disciples.

**Luke 9:24-26 (NIV)** 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.

Have you ever faced a situation where if you did the right thing it would cost you personally? We live in a world that is broken and where there are many temptations to do what benefits ourselves over what is right and brings God glory with our life. A boss may ask you to fudge the numbers in order to make something look better than it really is and if you do he promises you a raise. You may be tempted to lie to keep from losing your job and providing for your family. You may be asked to compromise your integrity to help a friend out of a jam and because you don't want to lose their companionship you do it. You may take something you have no legal right to take because you feel you deserve it and you are tired of being overlooked or marginalized. I want you to know that reading your Bible, going to church, serving at church, giving to those in need (what we would consider as good religious activities, do nothing to combat the temptation you feel when faced with the above mentioned scenarios if SELF is elevated. Heck you might even do these things for selfish reasons) But, if you are **consistently DENYING SELF, have made a commitment to CARRYING your CROSS daily and are keeping your EYES on JESUS** you will be prepared and resourced to make better decisions because your focus will not be on yourself but it will be on Jesus. You still have to choose to do the right thing but your mindset will be in a better place. You will be tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit. You will have access to the strength of His power to resist your flesh and you will feel the weight of doing the right thing rather than giving in to the convenient thing. If we want to do what is right. If we want to honor God with our life we must first confess that Jesus is LORD. But if we really mean what we say at some point we have to act on it by making the decision to die to yourself so the Christ can live in you. The Enduring Word Commentary makes this statement regarding Luke 9:24-26

*"You will never live until you walk to your death with Jesus," but that is the idea. You can't gain resurrection life without dying first." - Enduring Word Commentary*

The value of my life and your life will not be measured by the success we achieve or the things we possess or the lusts we satisfy. Our lives will be measured by our obedience to God. And one day when we all meet Jesus (and we all will meet Him, either as our Savior or as our JUDGE) you will only have two responses when it comes to your commitment to Him.

**"I wish I had" or "I'm glad I did."** Which one will be your response? Let's PRAY (as you pray over congregation move into INVITATION)

### **Worship Team Comes Back Up**

**Invitation:**

Do you see Jesus as LORD? If you do will you submit to Him and start looking to Him

What do you need to deny yourself of today in order to be FREE?

**Galatians 5:16-21 (NIV)** So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

**19** The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Jesus makes it very simple for us. It isn't easy because we have to deny self. But the concept of what we are called to is simple, KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS!

**Matthew 6:33 (NIV)** **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.