

Sermon Summary: Habits of Devotion — Self-Denial

Scripture: Luke 9:23–27

Main Theme: Self-denial is an intentional spiritual practice that helps us put God first, release the things that have too much control over our lives, and become more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Sermon Summary

In this message, Pastor Jon continues the Habits of Devotion series by exploring the spiritual practice of self-denial. Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Him. This means making intentional choices to put our faith into practice rather than simply going through the motions of being a Christian.

Self-denial is not about giving things up just for the sake of sacrifice. It is about examining what has our hearts and ensuring that God remains our first love. Even good things, such as hobbies, entertainment, or sports, can become unhealthy when they begin to define our happiness or take priority over our relationship with God.

By intentionally setting aside certain activities, comforts, or distractions, we create space to reconnect with God through prayer, Scripture, and other spiritual practices. These habits help us recognize what is out of balance, grow in humility, and experience greater spiritual freedom. As we learn to trust God rather than depend on worldly comforts, our minds are renewed, our priorities change, and our lives become more focused on serving others.

Ultimately, self-denial reminds us that following Jesus means living differently from the world. We are called to care for those who are hurting, serve those in need, stand up for others, and share the good news of Christ. Through small, intentional steps and the support of a faith community, we can grow into disciples whose lives reflect God's love and serve a purpose far greater than ourselves.

Main Points

1. Following Jesus Requires Intentional Choices

- Being a Christian involves more than attending church, being baptized, or going through familiar routines.
- Discipleship requires daily decisions about how we spend our time, direct our attention, and live out our faith.
- Self-denial helps us return to God's ways when we have become distracted or spiritually passive.

2. Self-Denial Helps Us Keep God First

- True love and devotion often involve sacrifice.
- Even good things can become unhealthy when they take too much of our attention or begin to determine our happiness.
- Self-denial helps us examine what truly has our hearts and restore Jesus as our first love.

3. Giving Something Up Creates Space for God

- Setting aside a meal, a television program, phone time, or another activity can create opportunities for prayer, Scripture reading, and reflection.
- The purpose is not simply to give something up, but to draw closer to God.
- These practices remind us that we depend on God for our lives, strength, and guidance.

4. Self-Denial Brings Spiritual Growth and Freedom

- Spiritual practices help us recognize what is out of balance in our lives.
- As our priorities change, we can become less controlled by activities, possessions, and distractions.
- God renews our minds, gives us wisdom, and helps us understand what truly matters.

5. Self-Denial Leads to Humility and Service

- Following Jesus means caring for people who are hurting, lonely, or in need.
- Taking up our cross means making sacrifices out of love for God and our neighbors.
- Our faith should move us beyond our own interests and toward serving others.

6. Disciples of Jesus Live Differently

- The values of God's kingdom often differ from the promises and priorities of the world.
- Temporary pleasures have their place, but they cannot compare with the lasting purpose found in Christ.
- Through Jesus, our lives can contribute to lasting transformation in individuals, communities, and future generations.

7. Start with One Intentional Step

- Spiritual growth happens gradually through God's grace.
- Joining a discipleship group, talking with other believers, and practicing spiritual habits together can encourage growth.
- Begin by identifying one thing to set aside intentionally so you can spend more time with God and be more present with others.

Key Takeaway

Self-denial is not simply about giving something up; it is about making room for God. When we release the things that compete for our hearts, we grow in faith, discover greater freedom, and become more available to love and serve others as Jesus calls us to do.