

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – December 22, 2024

Theme: Living a Life of Sacrifice and Service Topic: Take Up Your Cross

Main Texts: Luke 9:21-26, Phil 2:12

Key verse: Luke 9:23 – *‘Then He said to them all, “if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”’(NKJV)*

INTRODUCTION: The cross is at the center of our Christian faith, together with the empty tomb. The cross is a pivotal point where God’s work in redemption converged. When Our Lord Jesus spoke to the disciples of the cross, they would have understood precisely what he meant. The cross at the time of the Roman Empire meant not just death but a most gruesome, cruel, shameful death. The cross was “an emblem of suffering and shame.” Just before our main text begins, Jesus was revealed as the long-awaited Messiah – “the Christ of God” (Lk 9:20). He immediately tells his disciples that he would be rejected, suffer, and die a criminal’s death. This must have been perplexing to the disciples, who were expecting the Messiah to ride majestically into Jerusalem and throw out the hated Roman oppressors. To compound their confusion, Jesus tells them that to “come after” or follow him, they will also have to endure suffering. Jesus was saying that to follow him meant more than to believe he was the Christ; a follower or disciple must imitate his life and obey his commands, being prepared to suffer and die, too, if called to do so. The call to follow Jesus is a call to share in the fellowship of the cross – every single day.

1.(a) Read Luke 9: 23. What does Jesus mean by “IF ANYONE desires to come after me”? (b) Does this invitation to discipleship exclude any set of persons? (c) Jesus used the word “MUST”. What does this tell us about this condition for discipleship He placed before us?

In the Roman world, crosses were forced on those who carried them; they did not “take them up” of their own volition. Here, (Luke 9:23) Jesus said that those who follow Him must voluntarily **take up** their cross. Being a disciple is a personal choice open to anyone. It is not a group/family decision or one that can be made by proxy. To repent and believe in Christ and acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour may be a once-in-a-lifetime declaration, yet it begins a lifetime journey of daily decisions to DENY ourselves, TAKE UP our cross, and FOLLOW Him. Jesus spoke a lot about self-denial (e.g. Lk 14:26,27; Matt. 10:38, 16:24; Mk 8:34; Jn 12:24-26). Our Lord was not calling his disciples to martyrdom for its own sake but showing us the way to a new life. In losing our (temporal) life, we gain His (eternal) life, but if we try to avoid the cost of discipleship and seek to remain in control of our life, we will lose it, even if we were to “gain the whole world” in return (Lk 9:24-25). It has been said that “he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

2.Read Lk 9:24-26 and Jn 12:23-26(a) What reasons do these passages give for dying to ourselves? (b) What does it mean to deny yourself and take up ‘YOUR’ cross? Let participants give and discuss practical examples of taking up one’s cross. (c) What does it mean to be ashamed of Jesus and His words? Is verse 26 referring to believers or unbelievers?

We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Salvation is a gift, not of works, so no one can boast of having earned their salvation. So, when we are told to work out our own salvation in Phil 2:12, it is “not to **work** our salvation in the sense of accomplishing it, but, rather, to **work out** our salvation – to make it evident in every area of our lives, to *activate* the salvation God freely gave us.” Coming to Jesus, believing in Him, and accepting Him into our lives comes at no cost to us, but following Jesus does come at a cost. Working out what God has worked in means to deny myself, take up my cross daily...”. It is my responsibility, and it takes a great deal of action. I can do the work and meet the cost with confidence because God enables me to do so because He is at work in me (Phil 2:13). We take up our cross daily in obedience to Christ’s teaching because we have a goal: to be like Him!

3.Read Phil 2:12-13; Matt 11:28-30(a) Discuss what it means to work out your OWN salvation. (b) In practical terms, how do I follow Christ daily? – Ref: 1 Pet 2: 18 – 25; Heb 12: 1 - 4. (c) What hindrances or discouragements do we face in our effort to follow Jesus faithfully? Let participants identify and discuss them. – Ref: 1 Cor 9: 23 – 27; 2 Tim 2: 3 – 7.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for calling me unto you. I have decided to follow you daily, give me the grace to empty myself and forgo everything in pursuit of you. In laying aside all, may I follow you daily.