

# Discipleship

## Week 5: Self-Denial

**Verse:** And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23

**Application:** Giving up the lawful enjoyment of some object, right or preference for the cause of Christ and in obedience to the Spirit.

**Text:** Daniel 1:1-21, John 14:24-26

### Questions:

- What might be a wrong motive for self-denial? If the motive is wrong, is it really self-denial?
- What should be our motivation for self-denial? To earn God's favor?
- List areas where people in the world display self-denial. What is their motivation?
- Is God pleased with all self-denial? If not, when is He pleased?
- Why would God want us to deny ourselves?
- What are some areas of life where you can practice self-denial?
- Define self-denial in terms as it relates to the Christian walk.
- Describe what spiritual self-denial is *not*. (It is not: giving up sin; forsaking something for prudential reasons, such as health; doing or omitting something from selfish reasons; giving something that has no value to us; doing something that does not subject us to privation, expense, inconvenience, or reproach. The point is, self-denial costs!)
- What role does discipline play in self-denial?
- Name at least four specific areas of life where you could practice self-denial.
- Explain what is meant by the phrase "death to self." How is this practiced in terms of daily living?
- How can a person "die to self" and still have proper self-esteem? (Proper self-esteem is rejoicing in who we are in Christ and being assured that God loves and values us. When this is the root of our self-esteem, we can avoid selfish concern about ourselves and joyfully relinquish our personal rights and preferences for the good of others.)
- Contrast self-denial with selfishness. (Self-denial promotes others—selfishness promotes self. They are exactly opposite states of mind. Finney says they can no more co-exist than light and darkness can co-exist.)
- "Taking up the cross" is another phrase that is sometimes in relation to self-denial. What is implied in this phrase? (It implies "deadness" [disregard] to the influence of the world and personal reputation. It implies a lack of selfishness. It implies true faith and confidence in Christ, and wholehearted devotion to Him.)
- What are some examples of ways we can take up our cross?
- Should ministers and fulltime Gospel workers be expected to manifest more of a spirit of self-denial than other believers? Why or why not?
- What results does self-denial bring in the Christian life? (Point: rather than bringing a feeling of deprivation or loss, true self-denial always brings the blessing of God and a God-given sense of soul-satisfying happiness. Far from being a burden, it is a joy! Self-gratification brings no such lasting benefit.)
- According to our focus verse, how often is self-denial to be practiced? What does the use of this word imply?
- What relationship is there between the experience of sanctification and the practice of self-denial? (True holiness of heart is the basis of a supreme love to God, which in turn is the basis from which self-denial must spring. Until the carnal nature is removed, self is still enthroned, and thus consistent and wholehearted self-denial will be difficult if not impossible.)

**Possible Opener:** Take a box of chocolates, bag of chips, jar of nuts, etc. How might self-denial apply here? (Diet, health issues, etc.) Might we be feeding ourselves spiritual "snacks"? Perhaps we need to deny ourselves for spiritual "tone" (not flabby) and health.

Questions could be generated around how these characters exemplified self denial.

- Abraham. Genesis 13:9; Hebrews 11:8-9
- Widow of Zarephath. 1 Kings 17:12-15
- Esther. Esther 4:16
- Rechabites. Jeremiah 35:6-7
- Daniel. Daniel 1:8-16
- Apostles. Matthew 19:27
- Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Mark 1:16-20
- Poor Widow. Luke 21:4
- The Christians. Acts 2:45; Acts 4:34
- Barnabas. Acts 4:36-37
- Paul. Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:19, 27
- Moses. Hebrews 11:24-25

**Supplemental Scriptures:**

Matt. 17:24-27

Luke 14:25-33

Phil 3:3-15

1 Corinthians 10:24-27

Romans 8:13

Luke 22:34

Rom 13:14

Gal.5:16

1 Peter 2:11