

ARE YOU A CARRIER ?

If you were asked, "are you a carrier?" would they be asking about a virus? Concealed weapon? Burden or anxiety or grief or hardship? This question is at the heart of Luke 9:23-24. Jesus had asked who the crowds and disciples say that He is. Peter answered, "*You are the Christ.*"

Then Jesus warned them that He was to suffer many things, be rejected by the powers-that-be, and killed, and raised on the third day. In verse 23 He said to all around Him, "*If anyone would come after Me, let Him deny Himself and take up His cross daily and follow Me.*"

DO YOU DENY YOURSELF? This verse identifies three characteristics of disciples who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. These were applicable in Jesus' day and for our own lives today. "The crucified life demands willingness to pour out one's life for Christ," notes RC Sproul.

People trivialize many clear points of Scripture to prevent them from doing just what this verse says: *deny yourself*. To deny yourself doesn't mean giving up chocolate for Lent. Denying yourself is much more comprehensive and life-changing. Your default mode is to exalt yourself.

If you are truly a follower of the Lord Christ, you are no longer in control, Jesus is. So your life becomes all about doing His will, not yours. You get off the throne of your life, and live a Christ-centered life, not self-centered. As Jesus prayed, "*not My will but Thine be done.*"

DO YOU TAKE UP YOUR CROSS? Daily? A man condemned to die on a cross carried the crossbeam to the place of execution. The beam would then be placed on a permanent upright, as in John 19:17 when Jesus bore His to Golgotha. Here in Luke 9, Jesus said that He would be killed, and in His day that meant a cross of crucifixion.

Then He says that if you're going to follow Him, then you're going to carry a cross. Your cross. We don't want to hear that. So we get creative. We define "cross" as some trial we must bear, an unloving family member, an illness or handicap, some unfairness of life toward us. Then we congratulate ourselves on bearing that cross. But they're just ordinary hardships of life.

Jesus talked about a cross that resulted in Him being humbled unto death (Philippians 2:8) under the control of others. Is this cross what you are talking about? "When we take the name Christian and openly identify ourselves with Christ," notes Sproul, "we must be ready not only to bear the normal sufferings that life brings, but to share in the particular sufferings of Christ. Unless we participate in the humiliation of Christ, we cannot participate in His exaltation."

And Jesus said to take up that cross every day. "Our crosses come from and are proportionate to our dedication to Christ, enduring difficulties for Christ's sake," relates RK Hughes. Do you have any difficulties in your life from following Jesus Christ? Every day?

DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS DAILY? Being a disciple means to follow someone and learn to become like him. As Christians deny themselves, take up their cross, and daily follow Jesus, living a life like His, they are being disciples. Christ-centered, not self-centered.

Sproul makes a profound observation: "The church is the continuing incarnation of Christ, and we must be willing to be treated as He was treated." He says this means a cross that crucifies your life, a cross that bears the name of Christ, a cross that you carry. It means you flee from following yourself and flee to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, in all that this means.

In John 6:38 Jesus said, "*I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.*" In the same way, Christ's disciples live to do His will. Jesus underscores this.

DO YOU LOSE OR SAVE YOUR LIFE? In Luke 9:24 Jesus said, "*for whoever will save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*" If you're going to follow Jesus, then you will deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. Give up your life to gain His life.

That's why so many trivialize this passage, crafting appealing words for itchy ears. They'd rather listen to preachers who teach that following Christ is the way to your best life now, to get your heart's desires in the name of Christ, as though God exists to please you, pamper your desires and make sure you are comfortable. That's a cross you could bear, right?

But such a travesty is not glorifying to Christ, or reaching a lost world for the Christ who died for sinners, but about you after all. Hmm. So are YOU a carrier? A carrier of the cross of Christ? ☐