The Cost of Discipleship: Following Jesus Wholeheartedly



Explore what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus through the Gospels in this 7-day study.





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Introduction

Understanding the true cost of discipleship is essential for anyone who desires to follow Jesus with sincerity and commitment. In the Gospels, Jesus teaches that following Him isn't merely about belief or occasional attendance; it requires a deep, personal sacrifice that challenges our natural desires and comforts.

Luke 14:25—33 provides a powerful passage where Jesus calls His followers to count the cost, to deny themselves, and take up their cross daily. Denying self means setting aside selfish ambitions and desires to prioritize God's will. Taking up the cross refers to embracing the difficulties, rejection, and suffering that come with following Christ fully. This is not an easy path, but it is a path that leads to true life.

Throughout these seven days, we will explore the meaning of Jesus' call to discipleship through key Gospel passages, deepening our understanding and commitment. Each day will help unpack important themes like self-denial, sacrifice, wholehearted commitment, and the joy found in following Jesus no matter the cost.

As you embark on this journey, be open to letting God reveal areas in your life where greater surrender is needed. This study isn't only about gaining knowledge; it's about transformation—living out the radical love and obedience Jesus exemplified. Prepare your heart to be challenged, encouraged, and strengthened in Christ.

















Your Verse

Luke 14:25—33 – "Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Supporting Scriptures

- Matthew 16:24 "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."
- Mark 8:34 "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."







Devotional: Counting the Cost of Following Jesus

Jesus' call to discipleship begins with a challenge: to consider the cost of following Him. In Luke 14:25–33, Jesus uses strong language about "hating" family and even life itself, which is a Semitic way of emphasizing loyalty to Him above all else. To be His disciple means to put Him first, even when it conflicts with our closest relationships or personal desires.

Carrying your cross meant a willingness to suffer and die if necessary — it was the ultimate symbol of commitment. Today, though we may not literally carry a physical cross, the principle remains: discipleship requires surrendering control and embracing hardship. Refusing to do so is refusing true discipleship.

What does it mean to you that following Jesus might cost more than comfort or ease? Jesus wants us to understand that the journey is serious and demands wholehearted allegiance. Let this truth prepare your heart to intentionally choose Jesus each day.







Reflect and Apply

	What are some comforts or relationships you might have to prioritize less to follow Jesus fully?
	How do you personally understand 'taking up your cross' in your current life context?
3.	What fears or hesitations come up when you think about the true cost of discipleship?







Journaling Prompts

1.	Write about a time when following Jesus was difficult but rewarding.
2.	List areas in your life where God may be asking for greater surrender.
	Reflect on what it means to you to "hate" family or life in the sense Jesus describes.







Prayer for Today

Lord Jesus, help me to fully understand what it means to follow You with a whole heart. Teach me to deny myself and embrace the cross, even when it is difficult. *Give me the courage to prioritize You above all else* and the strength to endure challenges faithfully. May my life reflect true discipleship and obedience. Guide my steps as I seek to live for You alone. **Amen.** \bigwedge















Your Verse

Matthew 16:24 – "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Supporting Scriptures

- Mark 8:34 "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."
- Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."







Devotional: What Does It Mean to Deny Yourself?

Denying self is a fundamental step in discipleship. It means turning away from self-centeredness, trusting that God's purposes and plans are better than our own. Jesus' invitation in Matthew 16:24 calls us to a radical shift of identity—from living for ourselves to living for Him.

Paul's words in Galatians 2:20 reveal the profound effect of this denial: our old way of life is crucified, and Christ now lives in us. This daily dying to self isn't a one-time event but an ongoing, active choice. It affects all areas: our ambitions, desires, and sometimes comfort zones.

As Jesus' followers, when we deny ourselves, we affirm that His life and will have priority. This challenges pride and the illusion that we have control. Instead, we embrace dependence on Him, allowing His Spirit to transform and direct us.







Reflect and Apply

1.	In what areas do you struggle to deny yourself the most?
2.	How can recognizing Christ lives in you change your daily decisions?
3.	What practical steps can you take to live out self-denial today?







Journaling Prompts

1.	Describe what 'denying self' means to you personally.
2.	Write about a recent situation where you put Christ's will above your own.
3.	List ways to invite Christ's life to be more evident in your daily routine.







Prayer for Today

Jesus, teach me to deny myself each day and surrender fully to Your life within me. Help me to lay down my desires and embrace Your will, even when it feels challenging. Thank You for living in me and guiding me through Your Spirit. *Empower my heart to reflect Your love and obedience*, and remind me that true life is found in losing my life for You. Amen.

















Day 3: 🖰 Taking Up Your Cross Daily

Your Verse

Mark 8:34 - "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Supporting Scriptures

- Luke 9:23 "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."
- Philippians 3:10 "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings."







Day 3: 6 Taking Up Your Cross Daily

Devotional: Embracing Daily Sacrifice in Faith

Taking up our cross is not a one-time act, but a daily commitment. In Luke 9:23, Jesus emphasizes this ongoing nature—it's about a lifestyle. Carrying the cross symbolized suffering, sacrifice, and even death. For early disciples, it meant risking rejection and persecution.

Today, our crosses may look different, but they represent the challenges, inconveniences, and trials that come from living contrary to the world. Being a follower of Jesus often means standing firm in faith despite opposition or personal cost.

Paul's hunger in Philippians 3:10 to know Christ deeply includes embracing suffering as part of discipleship. Suffering molds our character and aligns us closer to Jesus' own path.

What crosses are you willing to carry? How can accepting daily trials shape your faith and deepen your walk?







Day 3: 🖰 Taking Up Your Cross Daily

Reflect and Apply

1.	What daily 'crosses' do you currently carry for your faith?
2.	How does embracing trials impact your relationship with Jesus?
3.	How might you encourage yourself to persevere in difficult seasons?







Day 3: 🖰 Taking Up Your Cross Daily

Journaling Prompts

1.	Write about a time you experienced hardship due to following Jesus.
2.	List possible daily sacrifices you might need to embrace moving forward.
3.	Reflect on what suffering has taught you about God's character.







Day 3: 6 Taking Up Your Cross Daily

Prayer for Today















Your Verse

Matthew 10:37—39 - "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me... whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."

Supporting Scriptures

- Luke 18:29–30 "No one who has left home or brothers or sisters... for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much..."
- Romans 8:18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."







Devotional: Balancing Cost and Eternal Reward

Discipleship requires sacrifice, often costly in worldly terms, but the spiritual rewards surpass the losses. Jesus doesn't sugarcoat it—He demands the highest loyalty, even above family. This message underscores the total commitment required.

Yet, God's promises are profound. Luke 18:29–30 reminds believers that sacrifices will not go unnoticed. God recompenses those who lose earthly possessions or relationships for His sake with manifold blessings, often with eternal implications.

Paul's perspective in Romans 8:18 encourages us to view suffering through an eternal lens—what we endure now is light compared to future glory. This eternal perspective helps us endure hardships with hope and joy.

Consider how eternal rewards can motivate and sustain you through present costs.







Reflect and Apply

	Are you fully convinced that the reward of following Jesus outweighs any cost?
2.	What can help you maintain an eternal perspective in difficult times?
3.	How does loving God above all else change your current relationships?







Journaling Prompts

1.	Write about a sacrifice you have made in faith that you feel God blessed.
2.	Reflect on how eternal rewards shape your motivation to follow Jesus.
3.	List ways to keep your focus on eternal glory rather than temporary loss.







Prayer for Today







Day 5: 🚵 Following Jesus: A Lifetime Journey









Day 5: 🛕 Following Jesus: A Lifetime Journey

Your Verse

John 21:18–19 – "When you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands... follow me."

Supporting Scriptures

- Matthew 28:19–20 "Go and make disciples of all nations... I am with you always."
- Hebrews 12:1-2 "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus."







Day 5: 🛕 Following Jesus: A Lifetime Journey

Devotional: Living Out a Lifelong Commitment to Jesus

Following Jesus is not a moment but a lifelong journey. In John 21:18–19, Jesus predicts Peter's future and reiterates the call to "follow me" as a continual path, despite challenges or changes in life.

This journey requires perseverance—like running a race or marching toward a goal. In Hebrews 12, believers are encouraged to shed distractions and fix their eyes on Jesus as they endure.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 calls us to active, ongoing discipleship that impacts others and keeps Jesus at the center.

Today, reflect on your spiritual journey and what it looks like to follow Jesus every day, committed through all seasons of life.







Day 5: A Lifetime Journey

Reflect and Apply

1.	How has your journey of following Jesus changed over time?
2.	What are ways you can renew your commitment to Him today?
3.	How does keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus help in hardships?







Day 5: 🛕 Following Jesus: A Lifetime Journey

Journaling Prompts

1.	Write about your personal story of following Jesus.
2.	List spiritual disciplines that help you persevere in faith.
3.	Reflect on how you can actively disciple others as part of your journey.







Day 5: 🛕 Following Jesus: A Lifetime Journey

Prayer for Today

Jesus, thank You for inviting me to follow You all my life. Help me to persevere with faith and joy, fixing my eyes on You through every season. *Guide my steps and empower me to be a light to others* as I strive to live as Your disciple daily. Amen.















Your Verse

2 Corinthians 12:9 – "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Supporting Scriptures

- Psalm 55:22 "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you."
- Isaiah 40:29 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."







Devotional: Embracing Grace in Our Weakness

Discipleship often reveals how weak and dependent we truly are. Jesus' call to deny self and take up the cross exposes our limits and need for God's strength. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul shares a profound truth: God's grace is enough, and His power shines brightest in our weakness.

When we feel inadequate or overwhelmed by the cost of discipleship, God invites us to lean on Him. Psalm 55:22 encourages us to cast burdens on the Lord, knowing He sustains and upholds us.

Isaiah 40 also reminds us that God renews strength for the weary. Our journey is not walked alone; God's power carries us through challenges we cannot face on our own.

Lean into this truth today and welcome God's empowering grace in your life.







Reflect and Apply







Journaling Prompts

1.	Write about a time you experienced God's strength in weakness.
2.	Reflect on burdens you need to cast onto the Lord right now.
3.	List practical ways to invite God's grace into difficult moments.







Prayer for Today

Gracious God, thank You that Your power is perfect in my weakness. When I feel tired or overwhelmed, help me to rely fully on Your grace and strength. *Remind me daily that I do not walk alone* and that Your sustaining love never fails. Fill me with courage and peace as I continue to follow You. Amen.









Day 7: 🎇 Living as True Disciples









Day 7: 💥 Living as True Disciples

Your Verse

John 13:34–35 – "A new command I give you: Love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."

Supporting Scriptures

- Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before others... that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father."
- 1 John 2:6 "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."







Day 7: 💥 Living as True Disciples

Devotional: Reflected Love: The Mark of Discipleship

True discipleship culminates in the love and character we display in everyday life. Jesus commands us to love one another, saying this love is the defining mark of His followers. This shows that the cost of discipleship manifests not only in sacrifice but in love expressed through actions.

Matthew 5:16 encourages us to let our light shine so others see God's glory through our deeds. Living as Jesus lived means embodying His humility, compassion, and obedience to the Father.

As we conclude this study, reflect on how denying self and taking up the cross lead to a life that bears fruit for God's kingdom. Let love be your daily witness and motivation.







Day 7: 🎇 Living as True Disciples

Reflect and Apply

How does your love for others reflect your discipleship?
In what ways can you better imitate Jesus in daily life?
What practical steps can you take to let your light shine brighter?







Day 7: 🎇 Living as True Disciples

Journaling Prompts

1.	Write about someone you can show Christlike love to this week.
2.	Reflect on habits you want to develop to live more like Jesus.
3.	List ways your life could better point others to God's glory.







Day 7: 💥 Living as True Disciples

Prayer for Today

Lord Jesus, help me to live and love as You commanded. May my life reflect Your grace and compassion so others recognize me as Your disciple. *Empower me to shine Your light and make good deeds a testimony to Your goodness.* Continue shaping me to be more like You each day. Amen. **



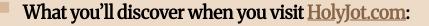




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