

iii) A new life

'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.' Rom 6:4

'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' Gal 2:20

'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' Colossians 1:27



Denying yourself is not about abstinence or external forms of denial, it's about choosing to know the truth, that *'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.'*

The Christian life becomes wearisome when we try to live it in our own strength, we may manage on a Sunday morning but we can't keep it up for the week.

Denying ourselves is the starting point in following Jesus.

When you deny yourself you enter into the truth that your old life with all its weakness, limitations & strengths has died and Christ himself now lives in you.

You enter into a daily choice where *'it's no longer I, but Christ'*.

It's a new life, imagine - Christ himself now living in you!

Christ himself living and doing his own work in you - at home, in your community or workplace. Christ in you, the hope (the confident expectation) of glory.

This is how God wants to change his world - *'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'*

Pause for Personal Prayer



'Christ in you, the hope of glory' - can you believe it? Pause to pray.

Discuss



- Read Colossians 1:27 – what makes sense, what questions do you have?
- What difference does/could Christ living in you make in your life?

Taking it Further

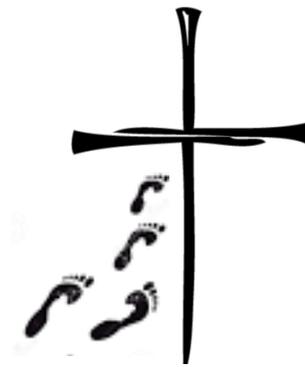
Take time to prayerfully reflect on Colossians 1:27.

'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Do you believe it? Ask him to help you.

Following Jesus Christ

Monday to Saturday

4: Deny yourself



How does what happens in church on a Sunday affect your everyday life?

Do you sometimes feel uplifted by a church service but then come back to earth with a bump as you leave and find that the world outside hasn't changed?

The challenge is that Jesus calls us to follow him and to live out our faith in every part of our lives Monday to Sunday.

He wants men, women and children walking with him and ready to be used by him in our homes, schools, streets, community and work places.

That's the challenge but then the good news is that it must be possible - he wouldn't ask us and then leave us to struggle alone.

Jesus said: *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me"*. Luke 9:23

Everyday life is where the Cross and following Jesus becomes real.

This is where faith can be hard but it's also where we learn the most.

So the next step; what does it mean to deny myself, how do I do it & do I want to?

A suggested outline for the session

Open with worship and prayer

Divide your time between the 3 sections

In each of the 3 sections ...

. Ask someone to read the scripture & reflection

. Pause for a few minutes of personal prayer

. Then discuss the questions given

. At the end allow 10mins for personal prayer

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i) The truth about ourselves

'I know that good does not live in me—that is, in my human nature. For even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it.' Rom 7:18 GNB

'Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" John 8:31,32

How we see ourselves determines whether we want to deny ourselves or not.

I remember talking with a young woman addicted to drugs and sex, she said 'Of course I want to know how to deny myself, I know what I'm like'.

If we think we're fairly good people it's harder to see, but God is clear that *'good does not live in me'* Rom 7:18 in the human nature we were born with.

The truth about ourselves becomes clearer as we try to follow Jesus!

But what about those of us who've committed our lives to Christ, we're trying to follow him but our weak old life seems very much alive!

What does that mean? Have we been crucified with him or not?

Jesus said *'you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'*, Jn 8:32.

Something can be true but if we don't know about it it might never affect us. A fatal car crash affects those who witness it and are directly involved but for someone who doesn't know about it, it has no effect at all.

The truth is that Jesus paid for our old self to be crucified at the Cross with Him but we need to know that before it sets us free in our everyday experience.

The truth of the Cross is true, what a waste not to know it.



Pause for Personal Prayer



'You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' - do you know it?

Discuss



- Are you tired of your old self or are there parts you'd like to keep?
- Are there times when your old life seems very much alive?
- Discuss the car accident illustration above, does it make sense?

ii) Denying yourself



'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death ... The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.' Rom 6:10,11

'let him deny himself [disown himself, forget, lose sight of himself and his own interests, refuse and give up himself]' Lk 9:23 Amplified Bible.

Once you've seen the power of the Cross denying yourself is a constant choice.

Denying yourself is choosing to disown yourself, to lose sight of your rights & interests. Choosing to give up on your own strengths and weaknesses.

Of course we have a right to our rights but we can't at the same time have Christ!

Denying yourself is choosing to know the truth that you are crucified with him.

When temptation comes, choosing to press the pause button before you react and choosing *'to count yourself as 'dead to sin'* - it's a choice.

Choosing at that moment to believe that you are *'alive to God in Christ Jesus'*.

Denying yourself is a personal, constant choice to choose Christ.

It's like having 2 computer windows open at the same time; 1) your old life and 2) Christ living in you. Denying yourself is choosing Christ's screen.

Denying yourself is a personal choice, nobody should try to make you do it.

Denying yourself is hard until you see what you gain. You lose yourself to gain Christ himself with all his glory living in you. What an exchange!

Pause for Personal Prayer



Are you willing to deny yourself – what will you lose, what will you gain?

Discuss



- Look at the examples above, if you deny yourself what will you lose?
- What will you gain?
- Do the 2 PC screens above make sense? How would you describe it?