

# THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

“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. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.’” Luke 9:23-24.

Jesus was fully *human*, but also fully *divine*. Jesus wanted God, His Father, to take away this burden of dying on the cross, but Jesus knew that God’s plan of salvation must be done, so He asked for God’s will to be done instead of Jesus’ human will (Matt. 26:39-42). By taking up the cross, Jesus denied His human desires and did what God desired Him to do. The Cross is a symbol of Jesus’ *human* commitment to God and His *divine* commitment to us. Now Jesus wants *us* to deny *our* selfish desires and willingly obey *God’s* commandments and be willing to suffer, or even die, for Jesus’ sake.

The Open Bible comments on Mark 8:34 by stating that “**deny himself**” does not mean to hate himself or to go without something, but to give full control of his life to Christ.” Also it comments on “**take up his cross**”: The person who carried a cross was on the way to execution. Thus it is a graphic picture of one who is dead to his own will. He is ready to accept whatever cost are involved in a life of complete Christian commitment.” Real life is only found by dying to self and living for Christ.

The Open Bible also comments on Luke 9:23 about “**deny himself**”: Jesus does not speak of denying ourselves of some *thing*. We are to deny *ourselves*, our ambitions, our self-interest. Self must no longer rule our lives.” Also it comments on “**take up his cross**”: Jesus pictures His disciples as condemned to death and carrying their crosses along with Him to the place of crucifixion. We must live dead to self-centeredness.”

Jesus loves us so much that He willingly took up His Cross and died for us. We are to love Jesus, God incarnate, so much that He is our ultimate priority. Nothing is more important to us than Jesus, including our parents, our spouse, and our children. In Matthew 22:36-40, when Jesus was asked, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

We should want to take up the Cross everyday by worshiping God and serving others in the name of Jesus Christ. In The Wesley Study Bible it states that Luke 9:23 prompted Wesley to conclude: “that day is wasted wherein no Cross is taken up.” Therefore any day in which we fail to - worship God, pray for the needs of others, encourage others in the Christian faith, witness to others, help the needy, **or** study, preach or teach God’s word - is a wasted day.

As Christ is in the **center** of the Disciple’s Cross, we should trust Christ to be in the center of our lives, influencing our thoughts and our actions. Our Cross reaches up to God, as depicted by the **vertical** aspect of the Disciple’s Cross. Through Christ we connect to God through prayer and hearing or reading His Word. Also our Cross reaches out to others. The **horizontal** aspect of the Disciple’s Cross shows how we connect with others - by our witness to non-believers, by our fellowship with believers, and by our service to those in need.

So whenever we see a **Cross**, we should be reminded of what Jesus did for us by dying on the **Cross** - He paid the price of our sin and gave us the opportunity for eternal life with Him. But also the **Cross** should be a *daily* reminder for us to trust Christ, to worship God, to read His word and keep His commandments, and to love others through our prayer, witness, nurture and service.

NOTE: This Disciple’s Cross graphic came from the MasterLife book set: “MasterLife 1: The Disciple’s Cross” from LifeWay. This study guide will help you develop a deeper relationship with Christ as you practice the six Biblical disciplines of a disciple.