

## ***Denial of Self***

*“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.’ ”*

Mark 8:34-35 (NIV)

Denial of self is probably one of the greatest difficulties we have to face in following Jesus. Most of us have never had a cause that controls our life to the point where nothing else really matters. That kind of drive is present every waking moment of the day or night.

When Jesus came, He came with a mission, a purpose, that was with Him the entirety of His earthly life. In order for His mission to be accomplished, He could not compromise for one moment, or one area of His life. Every facet of His life was centered on the mission and He structured everything in His life around carrying that out.

Many of us have made emotional decisions at times to follow Jesus. After a bad week, conflict in relationships, challenges that have drained us, or a moving message by a speaker, we sometimes recognize that unless Jesus is at the center of our lives, life has little order or purpose.

Denial of self means the denial of all these things that are important to our lives. The word Jesus used was **“*aparneomai*”** meaning to deny utterly, to disown, and to abstain. Those are strong terms but necessary passions and commitments if we are going to make the decision to live like Jesus did.

However, in our culture, there are factors and influences that Jesus did not contend with. We have marriage issues, children, employment, and such that draw upon our abilities to stay focused and directed toward goals such as Jesus had.

So, what we deny is not the essence of these things, but their ***right to control*** our passions and conduct as it relates to Kingdom living. Obviously, we are not going to die on a cross for humanity’s sin and sickness. But we can deny the appeal of things that will take away from our reaching out and touching people who are in dire need of redemption’s power.

Jesus states that “saving” our life is a precursor to losing it. Saving our life can be defined as preserving it for self-consumption and a rejection of releasing control of it for the purpose of making a difference in others lives. Jesus says one will “lose” their life with this kind of attitude which means to spiritually perish or mar its condition.

Denying self for the sake of the Gospel is not excluding these issues from our lives or participation in them. Rather, it is making a decision to touch people that God brings into our lives for the purpose of redeeming, loving, restoring, even restructuring so a productive life can be lived.

Be willing to deny yourself so that capacity to bless others is filled with God’s love for people.