

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 2

MISSING PIECES
WHERE IS SACRIFICE?
LUKE 9:22-25
03/19/2017



MAIN POINT

Understanding the idea of sacrifice is crucial to knowing God and to helping others see who God really is.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Describe a time when you had to 'go without' or 'give up' something? What was that like? How did that experience shape you going forward?

In an age of self-indulgence, self-denial is not a popular message. But it is crucial to knowing God and to helping others see who God really is as well. It also shows that we think Jesus is worthy to be followed. Essentially we have to get to the place in life where we say, "If You don't give me one more thing, I still owe You everything." To take up my cross daily means that I deny myself what I want and pursue what God wants for me. More times in the Word, more selfless service, more living for Him in whatever capacity.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 9:22.

Look back at verses 19-20. Who did Peter say Jesus was? What is significant about his answer?

The term "Christ" literally means "Messiah." By saying that Jesus was the Messiah, Peter was correctly identifying Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament who would establish God's kingdom. The common Jewish understanding of the Messiah was that he would overthrow Roman rule and take over as king of Israel in Jerusalem. It is likely that Jesus charged His disciples not to tell people that He is the Messiah because He wanted to correct this misguided understanding of His kingdom and avoid being prematurely adopted as the king of the Jews. Jesus would not establish His kingdom by military overthrow but by humble self sacrifice.

How might the disciples have felt about verse 22? How might this have changed their understanding of Jesus' mission and their part in it?

Jesus' purpose was to suffer and be rejected by the Jewish leadership before being killed and raised from the dead. This was the first of several predictions by Jesus of His death and/or resurrection. If we fail to understand this, of primary importance, then our belief system is fundamentally flawed. But if we do understand Jesus' purpose, we can fully embrace the requirements of being His disciples.

What are some ways, even today, that people might misunderstand what Jesus' purpose was and is?

Why is having absolute clarity on this purpose essential for the Christian? What are some implications if a Christian or a church does not fully grasp this purpose?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 9:23-25.

What activities or attitudes are key to following Christ, according to this passage?

In your own words, what did Jesus mean by "take up his cross"? Why is doing so a necessary part of discipleship?

How might Jesus' command to "deny" self and "take up" our crosses daily contradict current cultural assumptions about how greatness is achieved in life?

How might our thinking about greatness need to change in order to honor Christ's command in verse 23?

Many people today assume that greatness is won through attaining positions of power and showing ourselves better than other people. Jesus, however, calls those who would participate in His kingdom to change their thinking. Denying ourselves daily means that we refuse to be the center and focus of our own lives. Instead, we must make Christ the center of our lives. Like John the Baptist, we must be able to say, Jesus "must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Why do you think Jesus specifically commanded His disciples to take this action "daily"?

How does carrying a cross through life affect the decisions we make and priorities we have?

Truth has consequences, and Jesus' teaching about His suffering, death, and resurrection has implications for His followers. As followers of Jesus, we must deny ourselves. This doesn't mean we must have a low opinion of ourselves, but that we are not to be self-centered or selfish. We are to place God and His kingdom's priorities first in our lives. Jesus was shifting His disciples' thinking away from the assumption that success in the kingdom requires overpowering others. On the contrary participation in the kingdom of God requires disciples to daily humble themselves in the service of others and total commitment to Him.

Do you think we have the tendency to water down the requirements of Jesus? Why or why not?

How, specifically, do you see Jesus modeling His requirements throughout the gospels?

What are some examples of half-hearted devotion to God?

In order to call ourselves Christians, we have to be willing to follow Jesus no matter what it costs us, because that cost is far less than the cost Christ paid for us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In what areas of your life might you need God to humble you? How might you decrease this week so that Christ might increase?

Is someone in your life suffering in some way for the sake of the kingdom? How can you encourage them?

In what ways can we help each other take up our crosses and grow in humility?

PRAY

Praise God for giving Jesus up on the cross to pay for our sins. Pray that Jesus' act of self sacrifice would not just be something we appreciate but that it would change the way that we live.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 9:22-25

9:21-22. Jesus was not ready to present Himself openly as the Messiah (v. 21). In popular Jewish views of that time, Messiah was expected to overthrow Roman rule and, in a wave of popularity, take over as king of Israel. Contrary to this, Jesus' mission was to suffer and be rejected by the Jewish leadership before being killed and raised from the dead. This was the first of several predictions by Jesus of His death and/or resurrection (v. 22). 9:22. Jesus had a simple but horrifying answer. Messiah in your mind is not what Messiah is in my mind or in God's mind. You look for deliverance, salvation, military victory, and national domination. You look to Messiah to lead you to war. But he is Prince of Peace. He has methods radically distinct from those of the world. He will not become messianic king of the world through war and fighting. He has another way, God's way, the way of suffering. Yes, he will stand against leadership, both Jewish and Roman, but they will win the first battle. Indeed, they will seem to have won the final battle, or they will kill him. Did you hear the last part? But on the third day he will be raised. Ready for that? First, you endure his suffering. And something else!

9:23. But confession in word must be validated by the confession of life. To be a true disciple of Jesus requires self-denial. The cross was the most painful and humiliating form of execution of the Roman era. Thus, to take up one's cross daily is to expect painful situations every day because of allegiance to Christ (v. 23).

9:24-25. The principle that one must lose one's life to save it as opposed to living only for this world is Jesus' most common refrain in the Gospels (v. 24). To follow Him, we must lay down our devotions to this world and live for Christ and His mission. No matter how wealthy a person is in this life (gains the whole world), he will be bankrupt eternally if he dies without Christ (v. 25).