

A WINNING FAITH: THE BEST LIFE LIVED IS ONE GIVEN AWAY

Use this guide for personal or small group study.

REFLECT >>>

1. There is no Easter without the cross. Why does the world want to live in a world that wants Easter but not the cross?
2. Our cross is that challenging thing we choose to do because we are His people. What shape does the cross take in your life right now? What does it look like for you?
3. Reflect on this statement: Religion says, "If you change first, then you can join us." Jesus says, "Come, join and follow me and you'll be changed." What is the difference?

READ YOUR BIBLE >>>

- Luke 9:23-26
- Micah 6:8

APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE >>>

1. Jesus' challenge to us are some of the most sobering words ever spoken in history. "If anyone would follow Me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me." How has this challenge helped you become a person of the cross? What are the challenges?
2. Your cross is not like Jesus' cross. We choose to do things we don't have to do because we feel it is God's agenda for us. What compels us to do those things we don't want to do because we, like the prophet Isaiah, say "Here am I. Send me?"
3. Jesus warns His followers about those times in our lives when we might be tempted to feel embarrassed or ashamed of Him. When you recognize that Jesus is the Christ, why is some response necessary? Will God's agenda always be ours?
4. Do you believe God wants to share His glory with us, and that can only happen when we pick up our cross? Why is this truth so hard to accept?
5. Somebody once quipped: "You can't follow God without going with Jesus." What does that statement mean for your walk with Christ?
6. One old saint expressed himself this way, "Life need not be easy to be joyful. Joy is not the absence of trouble but the presence of Christ." How can picking up our cross bring us a profound sense of joy and contentment in our life with Christ?

7. I love missionary Jim Elliot's words: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Why is this observation so true for any Christ follower?

Jesus' purpose for our lives seems quite plain and simple. We are to carry our cross and follow Jesus as our Good Shepherd. He knows where He is leading and guiding us. Our cross is not like the cross of Jesus. His cross was brutal and He died on it so that we might have our sins forgiven. As He said to His disciples so He says to us today: "Take up your cross and follow Me!" Our cross is that difficult thing we choose to do because we are children of the Heavenly Father. Our glory comes as we pick up our cross for His name's sake. We may choose a difficult situation to deal with, a painful relationship, a job where we are not appreciated. We may help with a committee assignment or get involved with a community situation to make our community better. We choose to do those things we don't have to do because we believe it is God's agenda for us. We say, like the prophet Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me." What could that mean for our lives? Look back in history for some insight. For Mother Teresa, her cross took the shape of Calcutta. For Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, it took the shape of helping the church resist the Nazis. Jim Elliot's wife, Elisabeth, upon his death said, "Give to get, lose to find and die to live." That's what happens when we pick up our Cross and the glory of Christ shines brightly for all to see!

PRAY >>>

My Lord and my God, You are the One who serves me, when I should be serving You. The One who so loves me, even when there is so little love in me. The One who fills my cup and satisfies my soul. Teach me to brave for You, not defensive of me. Show me how to empty my barns and build Your kingdom. Teach me to give my life away and love others like You have love me. For the sake of Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.