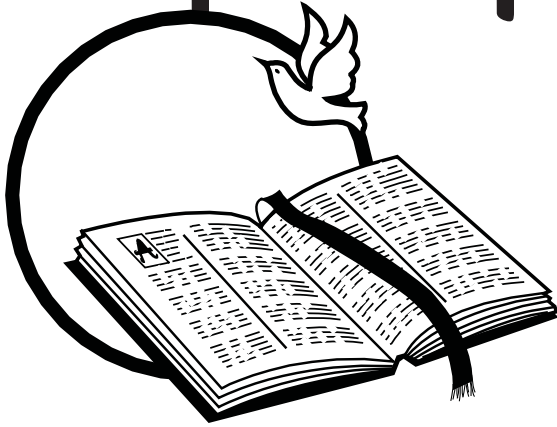


Discipleship



Life Application: Giving up the lawful enjoyment of some object, right or preference for the cause of Christ and in obedience to the Spirit.

Key verse for meditation: And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. — Luke 9:23

For personal study:
Daniel 1:1-21; John 14:24-26

From the life of Hudson Taylor: Self-denial will cost. While preparing for the life of a missionary, Hudson Taylor purposed to live frugally and in dependence upon God alone. One day he found himself with only one coin left in his pocket, and at that juncture, was asked by a poor man to go and pray with his wife who was dying. When he entered the squalid room where the woman lay, he observed that several half-starved children were with her.

Taylor recounted that the woman's pathetic condition and obvious need, along with his own limited circumstances, led to a spiritual conflict like he had never before experienced. He tried to pray but he could not. He felt it would be mocking God to ask aid while he withheld his own money, and yet—that was all he had! If he had possessed two coins, he would have given half, but he had only one, so it was all or nothing. In vain he tried to speak words of comfort, but he felt like a hypocrite, since he could not trust God with an empty pocket. Filled with distress, he finally rose from his knees, only to have



the distracted father say to him imploringly, "If you can help us, sir, for God's sake do so."

At that moment, the Lord's words, "Give to him that asketh of thee," flashed through Taylor's mind. Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew out his last and only coin, and gave it to the man. The struggle in his soul had been keen and crucial, but now it was

over, and joy flooded his heart. Later he wrote, “Not only was the poor woman’s life saved, but my life had been saved too. It might have been a wreck—probably would have been as a Christian life—had not grace at that time conquered and the striving of God’s Spirit been obeyed.” He went home that night with a heart as light as his pocket, but the dark, deserted streets resounded with his praise. As he went to bed, he asked the Lord that the “loan” might be a short one, as he had nothing to provide for his next meal. God did not forsake him. When morning came, the postman delivered a letter containing a sum of money and a pair of gloves. “Four hundred per cent for twelve hours’ investment!” was his response. He determined then and there that God’s bank would always have his savings and earnings.

“A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.” – Martin Luther



Think about it . . .

1. What is self-denial in relation to the Christian walk?
2. Name four specific areas where you could practice self-denial.
3. What is the relationship between sanctification and self-denial?
4. What should be the motive behind self-denial?

Challenge: Dolly Walker used to say that she made it a practice to deny herself of something “lawful” at least three times a day. This week, follow through on the same commitment.

A personal example:

Shortly after the Easter season last year, Maria Green commented in the Women’s Class, “I grew up in a church where we were taught to give up something at Easter. The purpose of this was to help us remember that Jesus gave up everything for us. Usually I gave up food, or else purposed to do something nice or special for someone every day during the Lent season.

“When I was saved, I understood that we have to give up our lives to God, not just give up something at Lent. Yet, every Easter, I still think about that custom because I did it growing up and it was good for me. I find it is still helpful to give up something.

“The year I was pregnant with our son Tyler, I had to be careful about what I gave up. What I chose did not seem to be very much. Yet throughout the season, it seemed that particular item was offered to me or in front of me all the time. Each time, as I said no or denied myself, I thought about how Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice. It made me think more often about His suffering and made me more appreciative.”