

My Goals Versus God's Goals

By Deron J. Biles

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

On at least seven occasions in Scripture, Jesus was alone: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15–16; 6:12–13; Matthew 14:10–13; 14:23; Luke 11:1; and Matthew 26:36. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What were each of these occasions? What events seem to have led to Jesus' choosing isolation? What can we learn from His example?

Assignment Two

On at least eight occasions Jesus predicted His own death: Mark 2:18–20; 8:31–33; 9:9–10; 30–32; 10:32–34; 11:27–33; 14:8; and 14:36. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What does this teach about His foreknowledge? What was the response of the disciples to His predictions?

Assignment Three

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–25 and Galatians 5:11. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Why is the cross of Jesus Christ a stumbling block or an offense for some people?

Scripture to Memorize

And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Luke 9:23

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will learn the daily, nonnegotiable plan of Jesus for all His disciples.

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He and his wife Jaye have been married twenty-eight years and have four sons: Joshua, Timothy, Jonathan, and David. They also have three daughters-in-law and one granddaughter. Deron served as a pastor for fifteen years and has also served as interim or transitional pastor in nine churches.

Deron is the author of *After God's Heart: Becoming the Man God is Seeking* along with its companion volume, *After God's Heart: Becoming the Man God Is Seeking, a Forty-Day Bible Study*. He is the coauthor of *Seminary Education by Extension: Process, Principles, and Practices*. In addition, he has written or cowritten manuals on pastor search committees, making resumes, interim ministry, and associational ministry. Deron and his wife currently reside in North Richland Hills, Texas.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real Life Scenario

Denied is normally a negative word. Some people may *deny* reality, while others may be *denied* something they request, such as a bank loan.

Where we don't hear that phrase enough is related to self. Sadly too few of us have mastered the art of telling ourselves no.

Introduction

In the passage below, Jesus explained that to follow God's plan for our lives, we must relinquish our plans for ourselves. In other words, in order to say yes to God, we must sometimes be willing to say no to ourselves.

This process is called discipleship. The "school" of discipleship offers no diplomas and has no graduates, only students. The school has only one Teacher, and there will never be any substitutes. This school has only one textbook, and the course description never changes.

Read Luke 9 out loud.

Studying the Passage

This entire chapter is about Jesus training His disciples. In Luke 9:1-6, Jesus sent out His disciples after giving them power and authority over demons and diseases. When the disciples returned, "they gave an account to Him of all that they had done" (v. 10).

Right after they told Jesus what they did, Jesus used the experience of the feeding of the five thousand to emphasize their limitations. When the disciples came to Jesus to explain the people's need for food, Jesus said to the disciples, "You give them *something* to eat!" (v. 13). Jesus wanted the disciples to be empowered, but to remember the Source of their power.

Immediately after this event, Luke tells us that Jesus was alone praying.

Verse 18. As He was praying alone. This is the second time in this chapter where Jesus and His disciples were alone (see Luke 9:10). This was a custom Jesus often practiced during His earthly ministry.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share answers to the following questions related to seven times Jesus was alone. What were each of these occasions? What events seem to have led to Jesus' choosing isolation? What can we learn from His example?

Being a disciple requires discipline. If Jesus needed time to be alone with the Father, how much more is that necessary for us?

Studying the Passage

Verse 18. Who do the crowds say that I am? He continued training the disciples by asking them who the multitudes thought Him to be. The people having just been miraculously fed

believed He must be some great prophet who had been miraculously reincarnated. But Jesus made the question more personal for the disciples by asking them, “But who do you say that I am?” (v. 20).

Peter answered with the right words. Bible scholars are not entirely sure how mature Peter’s understanding was or how much he believed what he said (see Matthew 16:13–23). How would you answer Jesus’ question?

Jesus’ response to Peter’s profession was twofold. First, He told them not to tell anyone. The time was not right. That would come later (see Acts 1:8). Second, Jesus responded to Peter’s pronouncement by prophesying His upcoming death. This was one of several predictions Jesus made of His death.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share about the eight times Jesus predicted His own death, what those passages affirm about Him, and what the responses were of those who were with Him.

Studying the Passage

Verse 23. If anyone would come after Me. This statement implies two things. First, anyone can be saved. Jesus said anyone who wishes can come.

Paul said, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). This is a clear and consistent teaching of Scripture (Joel 2:32; John 3:15–16; 4:14; 6:37; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:11; 1 John 2:23; 4:15; 5:1). The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for all who call upon His name.

Second, we learn how to come. Jesus said there is one way. This is not one of many ways; it is the only way. It is nonnegotiable. The only question is whether the lost *want* to come after Him.

Verse 23. Let him deny himself. Self-denial has always been the first step of discipleship. Christ and self are always contrary to each other. Even Jesus practiced self-denial when He said He did not come to do His will, but the will of the Father (John 6:38). Paul explained that Jesus “emptied Himself” (Philippians 2:7). Self-denial means that I give Him the right to chart or even change the course of my life.

On Your Own

In the space below, list some things you need to deny in order to follow Jesus.

Verse 23. take up his cross daily. Jesus had just explained how He would take up His cross. Next He declared that anyone who wanted to come with Him must also take up their cross! In Luke 14:27, Jesus said, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

What is your cross? Your cross is your willingness to lay down your life for Him and give up your priorities, your loyalties and your desires to Him. You must take up your cross every day.

Read Galatians 2:19–20 out loud.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: Why is the cross of Jesus Christ a stumbling block or an offense for some people?

Studying the Passage, Luke 9:23–25

Verse 23. follow Me. You can only truly follow Jesus after you have denied yourself and taken up your own cross. This phrase translated “follow me” uses different Greek words from the earlier phrase “come after Me.” In this case, following Jesus involves pursuit.

Verses 24–26. what does it profit a man. These verses describe the paradox of following Jesus. We lose in order to gain. That’s how it works in the economy of God. In verse 25, Jesus posed a “what if” question to explain the foolishness of those whose desires are misplaced.

On Your Own

Why would anyone want to deny himself and take up his cross daily? Bottom line, why would you or anyone want to follow Christ? How important are the following factors in terms of motivating you to consider all things as loss and follow Christ? Rate each on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most powerful motivator.

Since I am a Christian, this is my duty. 1–10 ___

If I do this, then good things will happen to me. 1–10 ___

My deep love for Christ motivates me to do this. 1–10 ___

My deep gratitude for Christ’s sacrifice motivates me to do this. 1–10 ___

As I do this, I will bring glory to God, the reason for my existence. 1–10___

Do you desire for some of these motivations to grow stronger? Tell Jesus in prayer.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

Today, more than ever, we need faithful men and women who are growing disciples of Jesus Christ.

Jesus never intended to make discipleship easy, but true discipleship is rather simple. *Easy* is the opposite of difficult. *Simple* is the opposite of *complex*. Jesus makes discipleship simple, but not easy.

Discipleship begins with a desire. Some of the strongest and most genuine motivations for a life of discipleship include deep love for Christ, gratitude for His sacrifice and for the gospel, awe over the enthroned majesty of Jesus, and a genuine desire for the glory of God.

But just wanting to be a disciple won't make it so. Instead, for anyone who wants to come after Jesus, He has outlined the simple process.

First, you must deny yourself. Be willing to give up control of your life.

Second, you must take up your cross. That means dying to your old way of life. Jesus expects a daily sacrifice of our lives to Him.

Finally, Jesus extends the invitation to follow Him. But that only happens after we have denied ourselves and taken up our cross.

The irony is, when we lose our lives for Him, we find life. But, if we selfishly hold on to control, we lose everything. Jesus confirmed that is not a good bargain.

Jesus died for you so you could die to you and live in Him.

Follow up Question

What are some evidences in your life that you are becoming a disciple of Christ?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.