

Discipleship Essentials: Demands My All

Darrell Johnson p. 27

“Life is difficult.” That is the way M. Scott Peck begins his book *The Road Less Traveled*.

Most people do not see this truth. Most people believe that life should be easy. But the road most traveled is the road of moaning and grumbling about life’s difficulties.

What Peck says about life in general is even more true about the life with Jesus Christ. Discipleship is difficult. Following Jesus Christ is costly. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus made it very clear... “Enter through the narrow gate,” He said, “for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Jesus promises to give anyone who will follow Him abundant life (John 10:10), but He makes it clear from the beginning that to follow Him is difficult and costly. He calls us to follow Him on the road less traveled.

Mark 8:27-35, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter, speaking for the twelve, said, “You are the Christ” (vs 29)

Jesus accepted their answer, but He immediately began to fill those terms – Messiah and Son of God – with unexpected meaning. “The Son of Man,” Jesus’ favorite way of referring to himself, “must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again.” (vs 31). Jesus knew he must leave Philippi and make his way to Jerusalem. And He knew that in Jerusalem he MUST suffer. And only suffer but be rejected. And not only rejected but be killed, crucified. And then be raised.

Peter could not handle these words. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” (Matthew 16:22). Suffering and death did not fit Peter’s concept of the Messiah. The Messiah comes in power and glory.

Peter also knew the implications for himself of Jesus’ concept of Messiahship. Just as there would be no resurrection of Jesus without crucifixion, so there would be no resurrection for the disciples without crucifixion.

There is only one road to life. This road ends on the other side of the empty tomb, and we do not get there except through the cross.

No one could ever say that he was induced to follow Jesus by false pretenses. Jesus never tried to bribe men by the offer of an easy way.

“If anyone would follow me – and I hope you will because I can give life abundantly – this is what you are in for. (Mark 8:34-35)

Notice Christ uses the word IF. That IF reflects Jesus’ acknowledging our freedom to choose. Jesus said, “Estimate the cost (Luke 14:28). “You call Me Messiah, Christ. You wish to follow Me? If so, you should realize quite clearly where I am going, and understand that by following Me, you will be going there too.”

Deny Yourself: Peter denied that he even knew who Jesus was. To deny yourself is to say, “I do not know the person.” ... To deny yourself means to deny your self-lordship. It means saying no to the god who is me, to refuse to obey the claims of the god who is me. A decisive no – “I do not know Lord Me – I do not bow down to him or her anymore.” Jesus calls us to say no to ourselves so we can say yes to him.

Take Up Your Cross: A criminal picked up his cross only after receiving the death sentence. When a criminal carried his cross through the streets, for all practical purposes he was a dead man. His life had ended.

Jesus calls His followers to think of ourselves as already dead, to bury all our earthly hopes and dreams, to bury our plans and agendas we made for ourselves. He will either resurrect our dreams or replace them with dreams and plans of His own.

Freedom comes when we lay down the ill-gotten, false crown, when we say no, when we live as though the gods who are us have already died.

Lose Your Life for My Sake: Herein lies a paradox of the road less traveled: we finally find ourselves when we lose ourselves for Jesus’ sake. And how do we lose ourselves for Him? By investing all that we are and have for him and His gospel. By saying to Him, “Here is my home, my checkbook, my talents and gifts, my brain, my heart, my hands, my feet, my mouth. Here – It’s all yours. Use it all to glorify Yourself and further your purpose on earth.

Jim Elliot: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

We believe that we deserve the things we have – the nice homes and new cars. We plan our future without reference to the kingdom of God and spend the resources we have to improve our own kingdom. We use the gifts of God to advance our own name, our own reputation. But, “unless a kernel of wheat fall to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24)

The road to new life goes through the death of the old. The road to resurrection goes through crucifixion. Jesus calls us to walk that road, the road He walked.