



380 S. Rosemead Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91107

Worship Time
Sundays
945 AM
Heart
Preparation

1000 AM
WORSHIP

The Third Pillar of Discipleship Building: **SELF DENIAL**

*“And He was saying to them all, “if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”
Luke 9:23*

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27

What is Self Denial?

Self denial involves limiting ourselves and our natural desires to do things through our own efforts. This is a non-negotiable clause of our relationship with God. In essence, this is saying No to me and YES to God.

This doesn't pose a problem if what we want is in line with God's will for our life, but the struggle starts when what we want does not coincide with God's plan. When this happens we are challenged to die to ourselves, to forget ourselves and follow Jesus.

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are under the law.
Galatians 5:16-18*

The Christian has 2 natures:

1. the old nature, which we are born with
2. Spiritual nature, acquired when we become born again

These two are always in direct opposition with each other, which leads to our struggles. But struggle is part of our life. It is a part of our journey. It is in this struggle that we become dependent on God, that we hold fast to Him because Jesus said He knows we will have struggles and difficulties — but we should take courage and find peace because He has already overcome the world. (John 16:34)

Dgroup Schedules

Tuesdays
700 pm
1102 E Swanee Lane
West Covina, CA

Thursdays
730 pm
2617 N Parish Place
Burbank, CA

Fridays
700 pm
5124 Ashworth St
Lakewood, CA

Self Denial and the Right self Image

There are 2 traps where we can find ourselves:

1. Becoming self righteous, thinking we are better than others
2. Wallowing in self pity, thinking that God could never love a sinner like me

Both these traps can lead us to a wrong image of ourselves. The bible tells us that we ought to have a proper self image in the light of Christ. Galatians 3:6-7 reminds us that we are saved by **faith**. Not by our own efforts, but only **by faith**. But believing is not enough. We are also required to **live by faith**. (verse 11) This is what God is asking of us.

Often times we fail at this because we have a tendency to live by sight. To depend only on what is tangible, and when we do not see anything happening, we try to take control of the situation. Doing things our way, instead of waiting on the Lord. This is something we have to be wary of because the bible clearly says in Romans 14:23 that everything that does not come from faith is sin.

It is only when we start denying ourselves, when we stop trying to control the situation, that we can see God working in our lives.

Consider this reaction sequence:

Needs ⇒ **deeds** ⇒ **habits** ⇒ **normal** ⇒ **IDENTITY**

This becomes an area of danger when we start defining ourselves by what we consider as “normal” rather than defining ourselves on who we are in Christ. This wrong perception of our identity becomes a reason for us to become self sufficient rather than God dependent.

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

Romans 8:5-8 (NLT)

Self denial in relation to God

Genesis 32, we see the story of Jacob wrestling with God. Jacob in all his life has been trying to manipulate situations in order to get what he wanted. Even when wrestling with God, he wanted to have his way.

The essential question here is : WHO IS IN CONTROL? Are you in control or have you let God taken control?

In Romans 8:5-8, Paul reminds us that our sinful nature and the Spirit of God is on opposing ends. When we allow our sinful nature to do what it wants, we are taking control. But when we relinquish control to the Spirit, then we will find peace. So we should follow where the Spirit leads us. We should follow where Jesus leads us. This means that when we deny ourselves and take up the cross of Jesus, we do not do this periodically — we do this every day.

Galatians 5:16-18 tells us that we need to be led by the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit leads we must follow. Because when God puts His Spirit in us, and when we allow the Spirit to control us then this will become our life changing and life defining moment. When we relegate control of our lives over to the Spirit, then we are denying our nature and depending on God.

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. But to think so as to have sound judgment. As God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Romans 12:3

NO to me. YES to God.

We have a tendency to manipulate others and circumstances when we find ourselves being denied fulfillment of our desires and expectation, even when these are godly.

How do we manipulate others?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Withdrawing | 5. Insensitive/ indifference |
| 2. Dominating | 6. Resisting authority |
| 3. Self sufficiency | 7. Pessimism |
| 4. Self indulgence | 8. Critical |

These are born out of our flesh because we refuse to submit to God's will.

What then do we do?

In relation to others, we must be able to deny ourselves so as not to cause our brother/ sister in Christ to stumble. Even though you know you are right, it is still the wiser option to say No to your desires rather than fight for your "right" and cause your brother to stumble, losing his soul in the process.

We have to learn to live a life of self denial, just as Christ did. To deny our natural and human desires in lieu of bearing the fruits of a Spirit filled life.

A lack of intimacy can lead to a lack of faith, which leads to an inability to deny our self. We should be able to catch this in our life. We have to remember that discipleship starts with a supreme love of God in order to start a relationship with Him, then learning about Him through devotion to His Word. . . this then will enable us to deny ourselves and allow the Spirit to have the freedom to move in our lives.

Discussion:

1. Are there still some things in your life that you are unwilling to surrender to the Lord?
2. What are the areas of your life do you find it difficult to exercise self denial? Is it in your family? Career? Finances? Vices? Favorite sins?

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or do anything by which you brother stumbles.

Romans 14:19-21

Works

Identity Check:

Galatians 2:20 WHO AM I IN CHRIST?

1. Who am i? What is my true worth? What is the price of my salvation?
2. Am I truly a new creation in Christ? Or am I hanging on to my old nature?
3. Do I continue to have struggles with my identity in Christ?

Galatians 5:22-24 BEARING FRUITS — FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

1. Do people know I belong to Christ?
2. Am I bearing fruits as a result of my relationship with Jesus?
3. What fruits do I want to bear?

In the past weeks, we have had a heart check and a life check. Today, we check our identity. Discipleship is a natural result of a Spirit transformed life. When we understand how much God loves us and how underserving we are of that love, we begin to understand fully how much we need Jesus in our lives. But knowing this is not enough, we have to have a life transformation brought about by the presence of the Spirit in our lives otherwise we nullify everything that we have learned.

Let us commit to pray for one another and hold each other accountable for the commitments we are challenged to take in order to have transformed lives. Self denial is not an easy undertaking and it is only by God's continued grace that we can die to ourselves and allow God to take control of our life. **Letting go and Letting God** is only possible with God's presence in our life. Only then can we become rested and distinguished.

Friendship with a Vision

- * Pursuing intimacy with God delights God. And when God is delighted with us, we will experience His presence in our life.
- * In His presence, we are protected and provided for thus making us distinguished. Setting us apart for His purpose.
- * His purpose for us is Relationship. A relationship with Him and a relationship with others who also have been distinguished and set apart. This is Friendship with a Vision.
- * DISCIPLESHIP is our marching order. To be discipled and to disciple.
- * Discipleship is the process of bringing people to Jesus Christ (**BELIEVE**) and building them up (**GROW**) in the faith towards Christ-likeness (**DISCIPLE**), for the purpose of spiritual multiplication (**MULTIPLY**) resulting in the glory of God.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

4 Pillars towards Christ-likeness

1. Supreme love for God (Matthew 10: 37-40)
2. Study and Devotion to God's Word (John 8: 31)
3. Denial of Self towards God and towards man (Mark 8: 34)
4. Reflection of Christ-like love towards others (Matthew 22: 39)

SUPREME LOVE OF GOD

- * Matt 22:37 commands us to "Love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind"
- * God's love language is OBEDIENCE.
- * Supreme love of God is about pleasing God. To please God we must obey Him in everything.
- * God's love for us is selfless and unconditional. He knows our sins will condemn and destroy us so He sent us a Savior, His only son Jesus — so that we can be freed from the bondage of sin.
- * The only thing He wants from us is for us to love Him. To obey His commandments. To surrender our lives to His will.

STUDY & DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD

- * Jn 8:31 tells us that for us to become Jesus' disciples, we must abide in Him
- * The Bible is God's love letter to us. It gives us an understanding of His nature, His character and His love. It also tells us what He requires from us so that we can please Him.
- * When we study and live out the Word of God in our lives in OBEDIENCE to His commands, we are pleasing God.
- * ABIDE: to live in moment by moment obedience to God's word

SELF DENIAL

- * Lk 9:23 tells us that for us to be able to follow Jesus, we must deny ourselves and take up cross daily
- * Self denial is relinquishing control of our lives over to God. To deny our human desires and nature and allowing the Spirit to take control, to transform us so that we bear fruits that is edifying to those around us and pleasing to God.
- * Who we are is defined not by what is innate in us, but rather we should be defined by who we are in Jesus Christ.