

November 4, 2012

Intimacy With God through FAITH Understanding trade offs

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. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:23-26

As we continue to strive to become true disciples, the enemy will constantly bombard us with attacks in order to discourage us. Because of this there is a strong tendency for us to become lukewarm. This is the constant danger that we are in. . . And though we know this, we continue to allow ourselves to compromise. . . And then we become comfortable in the lukewarm relationship we have chosen.

Because of this Jesus gives us certain demands of discipleship. These are conditions for us in order to become intimate with God.

In Luke 9:23-26, we see these 2 conditions:

1. we must deny ourself and take up our cross daily and follow Jesus
2. We have to lose our life for His sake, so that He can save us

In essence, Jesus is asking us to deny ourselves, because it is only in self denial that we can find the cure to lukewarmness. Self denial is the opposite of being lukewarm.

When faced with these commands, we might think that being a disciple is more of a burden than a joy — but this statement in itself is a lie. A lie used by the devil to make us doubt, and then we end up becoming lukewarm.

How can Jesus ask this of us?

Because He Himself lived it. He denied Himself, became a man and suffered and died on the cross. He could do this because he knew what the end result would be. He showed us by His example what it means to deny ourselves. Hebrews 12:2 tells us we should fix our eyes on Jesus. He is our reward.

It is true that His demands are difficult but His demands are backed up by His promises. . . And His promises are always reliable and risk free.



380 S. Rosemead Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91107

Sundays
945 AM
Heart
Preparation

1000 AM
WORSHIP

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

Fridays
730 PM
4706 Ivar Ave
Rosemead, CA

Jesus knew that we would come to a crossroad where we would have to choose between believing the lies of this world and obeying His commands. And so He Himself taught us how to fight temptation — to focus of God's character and know His Word. It is when we choose to believe and trust in His promises over what this world has to offer — this is what we call FAITH.

This we have to remember: SELF DENIAL REQUIRES FAITH.
 To carry our cross and follow Jesus requires Faith.

Without faith we will never find the confidence or assurance in the things that we hope for. We will never be able to hope for the things that we cannot see. (Hebrews 11:1)

We may think that Christianity — that having faith is impossible. But the Bible proves us otherwise. In Hebrews 11 we see a list of men who are considered Hall of Famers in the arena of faith. The list includes: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets and many others. These men are in this list not because of the miracles they performed, or the number of prophecies they had foretold. They are in this list because they were of great faith. They did not look at their circumstances, rather they denied themselves and obeyed God. They focused their eyes on God and believed in the promises He had made.

Let us focus on Moses. (Hebrews 11:24) *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.*

He intentionally made the choice to leave his life in Egypt and chose rather to hold on to the promises that God made to Abraham and the promise of a land of their own. He kept his focused on God rather than on the temptations of a comfortable earthly life.

So the question is — how were these men able to do it? What do they have that we don't?

These men were able to deny themselves and obey God because they had FAITH. They focused on the reward of being able to please God. . . Because they knew that if God was pleased, He would protect them and distinguish them.

Holding on to FAITH is a trade off. We are giving up something in order to gain something better.

Moses gave up the pleasures of Egypt for the difficult life of being an Israelite, but he did this because he knew there was something better. He traded off earthly comfort for what he knew God would give to Israel.

Trade offs is something we have done in other areas in our life — in choosing our spouse, in choosing to work hard rather than go on vacations in order to buy a house, a car; in choosing to study and finish school rather than partying with friends. . . These are some trade offs we made in order to get something better.

In verse 26, we see that Moses considered his options, which meant that he thought about it, studied it. . . He weighed his life in Egypt against the eternal rewards he would received if he obeyed God. And he choose the latter.

These hall of famers in Faith were able to have faith and succeed in God's design for their lives because they continued to have a deep and personal encounter with God. The more they learned about God, the more they witnessed how God would work in their lives. . . The more faithful they became over time. This is something we should learn from them. To allow ourselves to continue to grow in the Lord, to continue to have deep and personal encounters with Him so that we make know Him more. But in the process, we should always keep our eyes on God. In Romans 4, we see Abraham's example — he had questions about the possibility of ever having a child with Sarah. But despite his questions, he continued to focus on God — to focus on the object of His faith because he knew that God always keeps His promises.

Christianity is simple and not at all complicated, but the enemy and our selfish nature would like you to believe otherwise. He puts a seed of question in your mind, to shake the foundations of our faith — but in the end we should always remember that our faith is not based on miracles, it is not based on blessings, it is based on answered prayers . . . Our faith should be based on the character of God. We have to always keep in mind that we have a God who is faithful, who is gracious, who is loving and who is powerful. We should set our eyes on Him and what would please Him. Because when He is pleased with us, His presence will be with us always.

Discussion:

1. Have you ever had a deep and personal encounter with God?
2. What is it? How did it change you?
3. How has this experience help you grow in faith?
4. What will it take for you to take a step forward in faith?

Works: Journaling task



Let us try to gauge where we are.

1. Where does your Self Denial gauge fall at — 10 surrendered to God — 1 unable to surrender to God
2. Where does you Faith gauge fall at — 10 completely trusting and dependent on God — 1 unable to trust, still self reliant
3. Try to list down the areas where you are able to deny yourself completely, deny myself somewhat, cannot deny myself.
4. Make another list to show the areas where you are able to completely depend on God, somewhat depend on God, still depending on myself

Area	Self Denial	Faith	Personal Experience	What is God telling me to do	What do I commit to do
Finances	Deny myself somewhat	Still self reliant	My personal testimony		
Love life	Able to deny myself	Completely dependent on God	My personal testimony	To wait for His best	Prepare myself as I wait for God's best