

## Bonus Lesson #2: The Disciple's Cross

Healing Streams Ministry, Savannah, GA. All scriptures are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

By now you may be thinking: “this is a lot of work!” True, it is hard dealing with strongholds, but it is harder still letting them rule over us unopposed. No one wants this battle. It is a genuine cross to bear, but because it is a cross, it is also the power of salvation. And that is because **there are two crosses that save us**. The cross of Jesus saves us by getting us to heaven. The disciple's cross saves us by getting a heavenly life into us down here—it is a major key of entry into His Kingdom's way of living. We need to understand, recognize and appreciate the disciple's cross and why the Lord allows it.

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him <sup>(1)</sup> deny himself and <sup>(2)</sup> take up his cross and <sup>(3)</sup> follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 16:24-25

**We stumble at accepting the cross: notice the 3 steps.**

1) **Deny himself:** We are to trust and submit to Jesus letting Him be Lord—not self. Self wants comfort and immediate gratification, no challenges, struggles or risks. Self wants to be in charge and be at the center. It is only hard to surrender if you have a poor image of God.

2) **Take up his cross:** the cross is where your will and God's will cross. The cross is never a person, but it may be a way about them that you don't like and can't easily live with. We take up the cross by accepting it and the pain that comes with it. Suffering is having what you don't want and wanting what you don't have (Elizabeth Elliott). Accept it and surrender anyway.

3) **Follow Me:** if we are not willing to do 1 and 2, we will be unable to do 3!

Jesus says that in order to become disciples we will have to deny self and take up the cross and follow Him. How can we do that if we cannot recognize the cross or understand what taking up the cross means? The cross is hard to recognize because it looks like death—not life!

**The death by the cross versus by the enemy.** Did you know that both the devil and the cross are trying to kill you?

- The devil wants to kill all that is good and of God in you.
- The Lord wants to bring to death all that is wrong, all that is not of Christ in us.



We are to resist the devil with all that is in us. We are to submit to the Lord entirely.

- How do you know which is which?
- How do you know when to submit and when to resist?

*We resist the devil in order to embrace the cross.*

The cross includes learning to endure grief, shame and rejection. It hovers between self-sacrifice and self-denial. Through the cross I learn to say no to self (*deny yourself*) and yes to God (*take up your cross*) in order to keep walking with my God (*and follow Me*). The cross looks like it is bringing death, but it really leads to life. A prayer before the cross:

*I praise you Lord: This cross (problem) is not going to kill me, it is going to bring me to greater life.*

**The way the cross works.** The cross identifies and raises up your (hidden) flesh so that you can deal with it if you want to. The enemy will take opportunity by the cross to try to get you to go the wrong way in response to it. Usually, the hidden side of our fallen nature or self life just seems like us or like common sense thinking in us, but the cross identifies it as not of God or anti-God. Under the cross our spirit man wants to fight Satan even if we don't. Likewise, our flesh will often want to fight (resist) the Lord, even when we want to submit.

*The cross reveals my pride, self-will, self-love, self-righteousness and self-protectiveness. So, I hate it. It is not much of a cross if I readily embrace it. Not much of a cross if I don't truly hate and fear it at first—and all the more so because of what it makes me see in me.*



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**We hate and fear the cross.** We hate and fear the struggle, pain, loss, and risk that comes with it. But God is using the cross two ways:

- 1) To bring something good into our life we could not have received in any other way
- 2) To bring to death that life of self in us which hates and fears the cross because this is a part of the self life in us that doesn't trust the Father's love and wisdom. It needs to be exposed and brought to death for us to live free of those fears. We say "it's killing me," but whatever it is in us that is resisting the cross, needs to die.

#### **How to recognize the cross.**

- You can't get rid of it faithfully—legally in the law or honorably in the Lord.
- It seems to be killing you (you hear yourself saying: this is killing me!).
- You have to say, "Not my will, but yours be done" in order to find any peace and freedom.
- There is often a restless looking around for a way out or around the problem, rather than an acceptance of what cannot be gracefully removed. "In the absence of something better," we have to accept what is given or presented to us. In the way of things, the cross will either be accepted (now) or repeated (in a later trial).

**The great danger in refusing the cross.** Jesus goes on to say that whoever seeks His life will lose it (Mt 10:38)—if we seek self and self's desires we will lose His kind of life. If you try to rescue your life you will lose it. If you try to protect your life from pain or from the call of God or from loving others or from risk and challenge, you will lose it. If you try to take control of your life (rather than trust to God), you will lose it. Why are you here? What is your purpose in being here? To cater to self? ***Or have you come to do His will*** (He 10:9)?

#### **True submission to the disciples' cross—and the Father's will:**

Can you say with Isaiah, "I saw the Lord"—and have surrendered entirely to Him (Isa 6:1)?

*S: send whatever You desire to send (He is the Giver of blessings).*

*A: allow whatever You have to allow (of free will and its consequences).*

*A: ask of me whatever You desire or require (of inward and outward obedience).*

*W: withhold me from and withhold from me whatever is necessary (to fulfill your plans).*

*Father, if it is your will take this cup (the disciple's cross) from me. Nevertheless, not my will but Yours be done. I want to surrender to You in complete confidence and trust, willing to obey and follow Jesus in whatever He asks of me. Make me willing to be made willing.*

Beware: anything less than complete submission, is a step towards the Great Rebellion!

**We need both inner healing and the disciple's cross.** Inner healing is very necessary and important, but it cannot take the place of the disciple's cross, not remove the pain it. No amount of inner healing will keep us from encountering the disciple's cross in small ways or large or remove our need for such crosses. However, the healing that comes to us, helps restore our trust in the love of the Father, and that does make it easier to see the cross as life giving—so that we can embrace it more readily. Even the things that we need healing of are themselves forms of the disciple's cross—which we learn to bear as we seek His healing.

**Little crosses prepare us for larger ones.** All of the little crossings of our will throughout the day prepare us for the larger crosses of life and keep us in training at ***surrendering everything to Him***. Otherwise the flesh would quickly take over with its desire to have all things geared for its own comfort and pleasure. With wisdom we learn to accept our crosses for the same reason Jesus embraced and endured His—for the joy set before us!

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

