

Leaving an Example We Should Follow

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Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also." - John 12:23–26

Jesus himself was faced with exchanging his soul for something less valuable. Six days before he would be crucified, two of Jesus' disciples, Andrew and Philip, asked him if he would talk with some Greek-speaking Jews who heard he was in Jerusalem and requested an audience with him. It seems these Greek Jews had come to ask Jesus to go back with them to their homeland to teach, and it is clear that everyone knew Jesus was going to be killed if he did not leave Jerusalem. Jesus used the occasion as an opportunity to speak to the heart of Christian discipleship in the passage above.

Jesus, fully conscious of what his choices were, made the choice to lay down his life, to give his life on the cross. He knew firsthand what it was to die to self, and that choice represented his obedience to this fundamental biblical teaching: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (v. 24). The positive aspect of "if it dies" is that it "produces much grain." The death he chose was for the sins of the world. It was not just to lose life, but also to give life. This is what keeps his death, and Christian death to self, from being morbid. It was for the "joy that was set before him" that he "endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2). If we miss this truth and fail to incorporate it into our own experience, we will miss the route to life without lack.

The nature of the death-to-self experience is that, if we have had the kind of revelation of God that Job had, it happens naturally. Imagine what it would do for us if we could get a glimpse of what Job saw. He experienced the grandeur and greatness of God and was left knowing that what he had suffered to that point simply did not matter anymore in light of his new understanding of reality. Remember his statement of his own insignificance: "Now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself" (Job 42:5–6).

You will not meet many people who have experienced God as Job did. People generally do not pursue God that tenaciously or expect God to meet with them in that way. Most people do not want God to meet them in that way because they are afraid of losing something they value. The human heart is very complex, and the fact that someone trusts God at one level does not mean they have fully surrendered their life to him. But we seek God to work through those things and come to the place where we are ready to lay it all down.

The gospel is presented today with very little connection to the complete surrender of our lives to God. This leads to the real possibility that we will miss the central necessity of dying to self. Christianity tends to be presented as if God is our servant, instead of us being his, and God's greatness and love are not made manifestly clear for the hearer.

REFLECT

Anyone who has had a very deep experience of the gospel—plainly having set forth in his mind and heart the death of Christ on the cross, his resurrection, and his glorious present ministry in his people—is likely, in a very unconscious way, to move toward the liberating truth of the death-to-self teaching.



In what areas of your life have you noticed a receptivity to move towards Jesus' teaching of death-to-self? As you reflect on these areas, what were the positive aspects, the "joy set before you" that created the willingness to say "no" to self and "yes" to God?

Note: The devotional content has been made available through a partnership with [Dallas Willard Ministries](#).



JEFF WHITEBREAD | *Capitol Commission, Statehouse Pastor*

E: jeff.whitebread@capitolcom.org | P: 484.680.4260 | W: www.capitolcom.org/pennsylvania