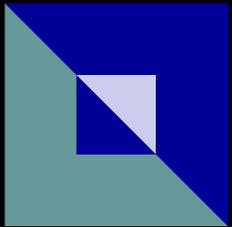


The Road to Golgotha...

Submit to God's Will

Lesson Five



The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road To Golgotha...Submit to God's Will Page 2 of 5

COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

The Road to Golgotha...Submit to God's Will

Lesson Goal: To encourage believers to understand the Christian life as a sacrifice.

Scriptures: Matthew 26:39, 42; 27:31-50; 16:24-27; Galatians 2:20

Memory Verse: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

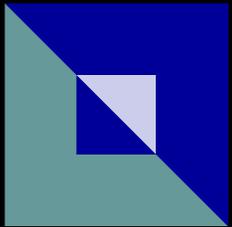
One of the most awful scenes in human history is the march from Pilate's court to Golgotha, the name of a hill which means "The Place of the Skull." The person being forced to make that march was Jesus. He was so abused and weakened by torture that He could not do the traditional thing; that is, carry the cross on which He was to be crucified. Not one of His friends offered to walk with Him or help Him carry the load. When Jesus and the soldiers got to the end of that road, Jesus was nailed to the cross which was then raised above the earth and there He died a slow, agonizing death. The crowd, including some of His friends, stood by and watched.

What had He done to deserve execution? What terrible crime had He committed? Who had He harmed so that He was condemned to that inhumane punishment? The answer, of course, is nothing had He done and none had He harmed! Through hours of illegal and unethical trials His accusers could only come up with a false accusation. The one able to condemn Him to crucifixion was Pilate and he simply gave in to mob demands. Even he recognized the illegality of the charges and ultimately washed his hands of the whole thing.

Sometime before that, Jesus was in Caesarea (Sess-uh-REE-uh) Philippi, and began to teach His disciples about His impending death. They didn't want to hear about it. However, Jesus quieted their objections and told them that not only was He to die, but that they, His true followers, would need to be willing to be crucified, also. He began to teach them that the Christian life is an offering to God.

Just as Jesus offered Himself to God as a sacrifice for our sins, we are to offer ourselves to God for His service. There are several things we should understand about His crucifixion as we apply it to our own lives of sacrificial service.

First, it was a one-person happening. As we have emphasized, not one of His friends came to His aid during the trials, during the walk up the road to Golgotha, or during His painful death. Sometimes the service of Christians is lonely. It is always a one-person response to the call of God. Even when we serve with other Christians, we serve according to God's personal call to each of us. The Christian life is an offering to God and to other humans.



The Road to Success in Christian Living

The Road To Golgotha...Submit to God's Will Page 3 of 5

Second, it was the response of Jesus to God's call. Jesus had told His Heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, the night He was arrested, "...not as I will, but as you will." Jesus was sent to earth by God the Father to live a perfect life and die a totally undeserved, human inflicted, death. Jesus in His humanity dreaded, mortally dreaded, the impending crucifixion. But, He was completely willing to obey the Father. Christians are called! We are called to all kinds of things. We are specifically called to live as Jesus lived, giving ourselves up for God's use. The Christian life is an offering to God and to other humans.

Third, it was a sacrificial death. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:25 that Jesus gave Himself up for the church. That means that His death was voluntary and it was for those who chose to claim it for their own salvation... that is, those who make up the church. Paul also said in Romans 5:6-8, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." With this in mind, success in Christian living demands that Christians be willing to do whatever it takes to be fully in God's will. The Christian life is an offering to God and other humans.

Fourth, it was the way to victory. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:6-11 that because Jesus was willing to become human and to be obedient even in death, "...God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him a name that is above every name..." And, when Jesus ascended into Heaven, God invited Him to sit down at His right hand. (Mark 16:19) Therefore, when we offer our lives to God, when we do that which God calls us to do, when we do it without counting the cost, we participate in Christ's victory. Jesus promises in the Revelation, Chapters 2-3 that He will give those who "overcome," "the right to eat from the tree of life...the crown of life...hidden manna...new name... authority over the nations...clothes of white...indelible name in the book of life... acknowledge his (or her) name before my Father and His angels...a place as a pillar in the temple of God...write on him (or her) the name of my God...the right to sit on my throne." Though we may not understand all that this means, we can be sure it is better than anything we can imagine.

Some people see Paul's struggle, mentioned in Philippians 3:14, "pressing toward the goal," as being his struggle to give up things for God. However, if we read a few verses before that, (Philippians 3:8) we will hear Paul say, "...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I might gain Christ..." Christ's great victory was to finish the plan of God for the salvation of humanity. He shouted from the cross, "It is finished!" Our great success in Christian living is to please God and follow Him in victorious service to others which He will ultimately reward.

The road to success in Christian living is not an easy road. It is not Heaven on earth. It is, however, a joyful road because God, in Christ, is with us all the way. First, He has placed His Holy Spirit in us. And, Jesus promised us in Matthew 28:20 that He would be with us always...everywhere.

*Underlined sentences in the Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.

The Road to Success in Christian Living

COMMITMENT

I believe:

- that God the eternal Father, creator of all things, loved me so much that Jesus came to earth to be my Savior.
- that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to pay for my sins, was buried, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to many people, ascended to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, and will one day return to earth taking all believers of all the ages to be with Him in Heaven forever.
- that when I made declaration of this, my belief, to God, I became His adopted child and His Holy Spirit came to be with my spirit forever.
- that my relationship with God is in His hands, and He will never let me go.

The Road to Golgotha...Submit to God's Will

Memory Verse:

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

Submit to God's Will:

- >The Christian life is an _____ to God.
- >The crucifixion of Jesus was a _____ - _____ happening.
- >The crucifixion of Jesus was His response to _____ call.
- >Christians are called to live as Jesus _____.
- >The death of Jesus was a _____.
- >"At just the _____ time, when we were _____, Christ died for the _____."
- >"While we were still _____, _____ died for us."
- >The death of Jesus was the _____ to victory.
- >Our great success in Christian living is to _____ God and _____ Him in victorious _____ to others.
- >The road to _____ in Christian living is not an _____ road.
- >Jesus promised us that He would be with us _____...

Deny Yourself

Jesus told His disciples that the only person worthy to follow Him was one who was willing to deny himself. What does it mean to “deny yourself?” How can you do such a drastic thing and remain true to yourself?

First, it must be clear that Jesus was not saying that we should deny something to ourselves. Discipleship is not about giving up things. Many think that if they can just give up certain sins, just give up some dream, just give up some hope, all will be well and they will be worthy to follow Christ. That is not what Jesus was talking about. The disciples who heard Jesus say these words...”deny yourself”...had already given up much, including their profession.

Denying self, as Jesus uses it here means that we give up self-interest. As long as the Christian is putting self first, we cannot put God first. A lack of self-interest allows us to value God first and then others. Some would put self as a third interest in that list. However, self-denial means that self is not in consideration. To be self-less is the same as being homeless. When you are homeless, you don’t have an address...you can’t go back home. When you deny yourself, you can’t go back there.

Denying self is not something we do for reward. Jesus promised no crown in Heaven for those who deny themselves. It is not a goal to be reached...denying yourself bit by bit until you have reached the goal. It is focusing so strongly on God, and others, that there is no self. That which was self is now inhabited by God as revealed in Christ, and those to whom God leads us for ministry. In other words, self is now God and Others.

The power that makes this possible is not human power; that is, the Christian doesn’t do this in his or her own power. The power for living this life is God-power. When you give yourself in love, the power of that love motivates and sustains the relationship. If this is true in human life, how much more true will it be in the eternal love relationship one has with God? God loves us. His love is going to motivate us to lose ourselves in that love and thus self will become other-centered.

Failure to obey Christ every day tells the world that we are not truly His disciples. Put in a positive way: Denying self means that Christ has taken the place of self. All that God is in Christ begins to be shown from the life of the believer and that means, no longer is the believer selfish, the believer is self-less. He or she doesn’t live there anymore.

Taking up the cross means a willingness to die to self. The cross, when Jesus spoke these words to the disciples, was the capital punishment of the day. When you committed a crime worthy of the death sentence, that sentence was carried out by crucifixion. In Matthew 10:38 Jesus says that if we are not willing to take up our cross we are not worthy of Him. In Luke 14:7, He says that the person not willing to take up their cross cannot be His disciple. Taking up the cross means being willing to die to the sin of disobedience.

Romans 15:1-3 says, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’” When we lose ourselves, we become just like Christ who lived not to please Himself, but to please God and those for whom He came to live and die. He was willing to become human, to empty Himself of His glory, according to Philippians 2.

If we see our salvation as simply relieving us of a curse and giving us the keys to Heaven, we are self-centered in our relationship with God. When we see our salvation as relieving us of the old self, and giving us the opportunity to afford others the blessing of Christ living in us, then we have become self-less and are truly saved.