

# Grow Group Resources

## - Sermon Summary

### • Life With Less

- The sermon is centered on Jesus' words in Gospel of Luke 9:23–25, where Jesus tells his disciples that anyone who wants to follow him must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him. Jesus explains that whoever tries to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for his sake will save it. He then asks a searching question: what good is it to gain the whole world and yet lose yourself?
- The main message of the sermon is that the truly full and meaningful life is not found by accumulating more, but by learning to live with less in order to follow Jesus more closely.
- The sermon begins by contrasting Jesus' teaching with the way our culture defines the good life. Our world often teaches that fulfillment comes through success, possessions, recognition, a busy schedule, and personal achievement. This mindset is humorously exposed by Jim Carrey, who once remarked that even winning more awards would not finally make him feel complete. The point is that even when people reach the highest levels of success, something inside still remains unsatisfied.
- Jesus offers a completely different path. He teaches that real life is found through surrender, not self-protection, and through self-denial, not self-promotion. To “take up your cross” would have been shocking to Jesus' original listeners. In their world, carrying a cross meant only one thing: walking toward death. Jesus is calling his followers to die to self, to release control of their own agenda, and to follow him even when it is costly, uncomfortable, and inconvenient.
- The sermon explains that practices associated with Lent help remind Christians of this calling. Lent is not commanded in Scripture and is not required in the Baptist tradition, but it can be a helpful spiritual discipline. It invites believers to intentionally live with less for a season as a way of preparing their hearts for Easter and remembering Jesus' own time of testing in the wilderness. More importantly, however, the values behind Lent are not meant to be practiced only for forty days. Jesus' call to self-denial is meant to shape everyday Christian life.
- Three practical expressions of “life with less” are highlighted in the sermon.
  - First, the sermon emphasizes simplicity. Our culture trains us to believe that more possessions, more commitments, and more stimulation will lead to happiness. Jesus teaches the opposite. Life does not consist in the abundance of what we own. Simplicity

creates space—space in our schedules, in our homes, in our minds, and in our hearts. When life is overly crowded, it becomes difficult to hear God, to rest, or to be present with others. Simplicity also makes generosity possible. When people intentionally live within their means and resist constant accumulation, they create room to give more freely of their time, resources, and energy. Simplicity is not about rejecting material things altogether, but about refusing to let possessions and busyness control our lives.

- Second, the sermon focuses on self-denial. Self-denial is not about hating oneself or ignoring legitimate needs. Instead, it means choosing what is truly good over what is merely comfortable or immediately gratifying. The sermon introduces a simple way to remember this priority: joy comes when life is ordered as Jesus first, others second, and yourself third. Scripture teaches believers to look not only to their own interests but also to the interests of others. In a culture centered on self-expression and personal fulfillment, this teaching feels radical. Yet the sermon points out that serving others, caring for others, and shifting attention away from ourselves often leads to deeper joy and emotional health. Paradoxically, we tend to find ourselves most clearly when we stop making ourselves the center of everything.
- Third, the sermon highlights repentance. Repentance is not merely feeling sorry or admitting failure. It is a turning—a genuine change of direction in thought and behavior. Repentance leads to freedom because it removes the burden of hidden guilt and unresolved sin. Through Christ, believers have already been set free, yet they can still fall back into old patterns that bring spiritual weight and shame. Repentance allows believers to continually walk in the freedom Christ has already provided. The sermon also contrasts repentance with the way culture often handles wrongdoing, which is frequently by redefining standards or denying that sin exists at all. While this may temporarily relieve discomfort, it cannot remove the real consequences or inner weight of sin. Only honest repentance and forgiveness can bring true freedom.
- The sermon makes an important clarification: self-denial is not a way to earn God's love. Before Jesus entered the wilderness and before he began a life of suffering obedience, the Father publicly declared his pleasure and love for him. In the same way, believers practice self-denial not to gain acceptance, but because they are already loved by God.
- Jesus himself is the model of this way of life. As described in Epistle to the Philippians 2:5–8, Christ humbled himself, took the form of a servant, and became obedient to death on a cross. Following Jesus means embracing the same pattern of humility and surrender.
- The sermon concludes by inviting each person to reflect personally. The central question is: what is one thing you could leave at the cross today? It may be a habit, a distraction, a sinful

pattern, an attitude, or a self-focused priority. Letting go of something is not meant to be an act of guilt or self-punishment, but a response to grace. The final message is clear and hopeful: life is not found when we accumulate more, but when Christ has more of us—our hearts, our schedules, our desires, and our attention.

## **- Grow Group Questions**

1. Start your time with a word of prayer, acknowledging God's presence as you gather in His name to look into His word.
2. Read Luke 9:23-27 out loud (Perhaps try reading it in 2 or 3 different translations).
  - A. What jumps out to you from this text?
  - B. What questions arise?
  - C. How do verses 21 and 22 help us understand what Jesus is saying in verses 23-27?
3. We are now in the season of Lent, as we make our way to Easter.
  - A. Have you ever practiced Lent?
  - B. What do you know about it?
4. Jesus call to self-denial and cross-carrying is for ALL who want to follow Him.
  - A. Does this message sound different than the one we often hear in the Western Church? If not, why do you think there is a difference?
  - B. What would it look like to take up your cross in a historical sense, and what would that look like in a spiritual sense today?
5. Our culture teaches and widely believes in a message that is the exact opposite of Jesus' teachings.
  - A. Think about our culture - what are the messages that are 'preached' that promise the 'good life'? Do you think these messages deliver on their promises? (Give some examples)
  - B. Can you see in your own life ways you subtly believe these messages?
6. Although difficult and uncomfortable, the way of the cross leads to real life. Jesus promises that in losing our lives for His sake, we will find real life. The Scriptures, church

history, and Lent show us different practices that can lead to life. Let's consider 3 of them.

C. Simplicity

- a) How would you describe simplicity?
- b) What truths would lead a Christian to this practice and enable them to make this choice?
- c) In what areas can we pursue simplicity?
- d) What would be the result of Biblical simplicity?

D. Self-Denial

- a) Self-denial is not self-hatred. What does Jesus mean when He calls us to deny ourselves?
- b) What truths would lead a Christian to this practice and enable them to make this choice?
- c) What would self-denial look like in everyday life?
- d) What would be the result of Biblical self-denial?

E. Repentance

- e) How does the Bible describe repentance?
- f) What truths would lead a Christian to this practice and enable them to make this choice?
- g) What steps can we take to pursue repentance as a regular practice?
- h) What would be the result of Biblical repentance?

- 7. Are there any thoughts or ideas that you have not discussed or shared that you would want to consider together?
- 8. Close this time in prayer and seek to encourage each other to pursue the life that Jesus modelled for His followers.