

Modern Day Disciples of Jesus

Matthew 16:24 (NIV)

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’”

Mark 8:34 (NIV)

“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’”

Luke 9:23 (NIV)

“Then he said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.’”

Each version gives a similar core message, but **Luke** adds the word **“daily,”** which emphasizes the ongoing, continual nature of following Christ—not just a one-time decision.

Definition of “Disciple” in the Words of Jesus

The Greek word for disciple is *mathētēs* (μαθητής), which means:

“a learner,” “a pupil,” or “one who follows and adheres to the teachings of another.”

But Jesus took it far beyond intellectual learning. A **disciple of Jesus** is someone who:

1. Follows His Way

- *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*
— Matthew 4:19
→ A disciple literally *follows* Jesus—leaves behind old ways to walk in His steps.

2. Learns from Him Personally

- *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...” — Matthew 11:29*
→ Discipleship is **relational**, not just academic. It’s about being shaped by His spirit and character.

3. Obeys His Teachings

- *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.” — John 8:31*
→ A disciple is one who puts Jesus’ words into action, not just listens to them.

4. Loves Like He Loves

- *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” — John 13:35*
→ Love is the evidence of true discipleship.

5. Bears Fruit

- *“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” — John 15:8*
→ A disciple’s life results in spiritual growth, blessing to others, and godly influence.

6. Denies Self and Takes Up the Cross

- *“Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” — Luke 14:27*
→ It requires sacrifice and total commitment—not part-time faith.

1. "Deny Yourself" – What Does That Mean?

This isn’t about self-hatred, but about surrendering the ego, selfish will, and fleshly desires.

Key Supporting Verses:

- **Galatians 2:20** – *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me...”*
→ Paul is saying his old self has been surrendered. He no longer lives for *himself* but for Christ.
- **Romans 12:1-2** – *“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice... Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*
→ Self-denial involves letting go of worldly patterns and submitting ourselves to God's will.
- **Philippians 2:3-8** – *“In humility value others above yourselves... [Jesus] made himself nothing... humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.”*
→ Jesus is our model: He denied glory, comfort, and status to obey the Father. So we, too, deny ourselves for love.

2. "Take Up Your Cross Daily" – What Does That Involve?

This is not just about suffering—it's about daily choosing obedience and dying to the flesh.

Key Supporting Verses:

- **Romans 6:6-11** – *“We know that our old self was crucified with him... count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*
→ Taking up the cross is symbolic of dying to sin—daily.
- **1 Corinthians 15:31** – *“I die every day.”*
→ Paul literally says this—dying to self, ego, and the world is a **daily** spiritual discipline.
- **2 Corinthians 4:10-11** – *“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”*
→ This “carrying” is not passive—it's a chosen identification with Christ's suffering and purpose.

3. "Follow Me" – How Do We Follow?

Not just believing in Jesus—but walking in His ways.

Key Supporting Verses:

- **1 John 2:6** – *“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”*
→ Following means imitating His love, obedience, prayer, and humility.
- **John 10:27** – *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*
→ It’s relational—we follow not rules, but the *voice* of the Shepherd.
- **Matthew 11:29** – *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart...”*
→ Following means learning *from* Jesus, and walking *with* Him.
- **John 12:26** – *“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.”*
→ Following Jesus isn’t just about direction—it’s about **proximity**. Being *with* Him.

Greek Meaning

In Greek, the phrase is:

ἔρχεσθαι ὀπίσω μου (*erchesthai opiso mou*)

Literally: *“to come behind me”* or *“to follow after me.”*

In Jesus' Cultural Context

Jesus was seen by many as a **rabbi** (teacher), and in Jewish tradition, a disciple (*talmid*) would:

- **Leave everything** to follow the rabbi (Luke 5:11)
- **Travel behind** their rabbi—literally walking in his footsteps

- **Absorb his teachings and lifestyle** with the goal of *becoming like him*

So when Jesus said, *“If any man will come after me...”*

He was saying:

“If anyone desires to walk in my steps—to be my disciple—this is what it will require...”

Spiritual Implication

“Come after me” isn’t just about **proximity**—it’s about **priority and purpose**.

It means:

- *“Submit your direction to mine.”*
- *“Let me lead; you follow.”*
- *“Choose me as your guide, your model, your aim in life.”*

Summary of the Message:

- **Denying self** = surrendering control, pride, desires, and ego
- **Taking up the cross** = embracing daily death to sin and obedience to God
- **Following Jesus** = living in His ways, staying close, and walking in love and truth

1. Spiritual Results – What Happens Now When We Live This Way?

Peace, Purpose, and Joy

- **Matthew 16:25** – *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”*
→ Paradoxical wisdom: in dying to self, we find *real life*.
- **John 15:10-11** – *“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love... I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*
→ Obedience leads to **joy**. Not emptiness, but fullness.
- **Philippians 4:7** – *“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
→ A surrendered life brings supernatural peace.

Transformation and Freedom

- **2 Corinthians 3:17-18** – *“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom... we are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.”*
→ Daily surrender leads to becoming more like Jesus—glorious freedom!
- **Galatians 5:24-25** – *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*
→ Walking this path keeps us alive in the Spirit.
- **Romans 8:13-14** – *“If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”*
→ Denial of the flesh leads to **true life** and **identity**.

The Rewards of Eternal Life

Eternal life is not just *endless* life—it is *abundant, relational, and transformational* life. The rewards aren't limited to some future paradise but begin in part even now, growing into fullness beyond the veil.

Here are some of the key rewards described in Scripture and Christian hope:

1. Unbroken Fellowship with God

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

– *John 17:3*

The greatest reward of eternal life is the **restoration of full communion with God**—face-to-face, heart-to-heart. No more veils, doubts, or distance. We will *know* Him as we are known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

2. Freedom from Death, Pain, and Sorrow

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain...”

– *Revelation 21:4*

Eternal life means the end of suffering—not through escape, but through *complete healing and renewal*. The world as it was meant to be.

3. Glorified Bodies & New Creation

“We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

– *1 John 3:2*

“The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay...”

– *Romans 8:21*

Those who inherit eternal life are **transformed**—not disembodied spirits, but raised incorruptible, like Christ after resurrection. We will dwell in a renewed creation, not a cloudy afterlife.

4. Eternal Peace, Joy, and Purpose

“In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

– *Psalm 16:11*

All striving, anxiety, and confusion give way to true *shalom*—peace, joy, fulfillment, and eternal purpose. We will *belong* fully and walk in love, creation, and wonder without end.

5. A Crown of Life & Eternal Inheritance

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

– *Revelation 2:10*

“...an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

– *1 Peter 1:4*

The “crown of life” is more than a metaphor—it is the **honor of sharing in God's glory**, reigning with Christ, and receiving an eternal inheritance no one can steal.

Summary of Rewards:

- Knowing God intimately and forever
- Freedom from death, sin, sorrow, and decay
- Resurrection and transformation
- Dwelling in a new heaven and new earth
- Everlasting joy, love, and creative purpose
- An eternal kingdom and unshakable identity

Reflection & Discussion Questions – Modern Disciples of Jesus

1. What does “denying yourself” look like in your everyday life?

Are there areas where you still struggle to let go of control, ego, or comfort?

2. What does it mean for *you* to “take up your cross daily”?

Can you name a specific habit, relationship, or thought pattern that Christ is inviting you to surrender?

3. In what ways are you actively following Jesus—not just believing in Him, but imitating His way of life?

How do you respond to His voice when it leads you into challenging or unfamiliar places?

4. How does love show up in your discipleship?

Would others recognize you as a follower of Christ by the way you love?

5. What spiritual “fruit” is currently growing in your life?

Are there signs of growth, transformation, or blessings to others because of your walk with Jesus?

6. How has living as a disciple brought you peace, purpose, or freedom?

What’s one way your life is different because you’ve chosen to follow Christ?

7. What reward of eternal life gives you the most hope today—and why?

How does this eternal perspective change the way you live now?

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

— **1 Corinthians 2:9**

This is a quote Paul draws from **Isaiah 64:4**, reaffirming that **God's plans and rewards are beyond human imagination**—especially for those who love Him and walk in His Spirit.

Paul continues in verse 10 by saying:

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

— **1 Corinthians 2:10**

So, while human senses can't comprehend what's coming, **the Holy Spirit** begins to reveal these hidden things even now—especially to disciples.