



If anyone wishes to follow
Me, he must deny himself
Matthew 16:24

In Complete Denial

Read: Matthew 10:26-33

In the gospel Jesus continues to describe the cost of discipleship. He reminds us that if we choose to live according to our earthly desires, and not focus on following him, our reward will be eternal separation from God. But, if we choose to take up our cross and follow Jesus, then we will receive the reward of everlasting life in His kingdom.

The greatest challenge we face in following Jesus is denying ourselves the comforts, leisures and distractions of life. This runs counter to our societal norms. It's easier to watch Netflix than to pray, go to sports events than head to mass, buy a new personal luxury instead of donating that money to the church or the poor, or playing on our phones instead of reading spiritual books. Now there is nothing wrong with these pursuits. But when we choose any activity over our relationship with Jesus, we are failing to welcome Jesus into our midst (Matt 10:40).

In the book of Romans, St. Paul informs us that in order to “walk in the newness of life” we need to deny ourselves by casting off our self-centered ambition. We can't claim to be true followers of Jesus if we are not committed to spiritual growth. Of course, we will all fail at our attempts to be “righteous”. But Jesus doesn't ask for perfection, just effort.

Denying ourselves is hard. I know because I suck at it. The strange thing is, the more we deny ourselves and move closer to Jesus, the more we will experience his peace, joy, comfort and love in our lives. But getting to that point takes hard work and sacrifice. It isn't always comfortable. We can take the easy way out, and fail to grow into who God has created us to be. Or, we can take up our crosses, work at our faith, and gain the eternal reward we were destined to receive.

Grow: This week deny yourself of one activity that distracts you from following Jesus. In its place, pick one activity that will help your relationship with Jesus grow.