Question: *What did Jesus mean when He said we must deny ourselves and take up our cross? What does that actually look like in real life?*

Mark 8:34–37 (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. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?’”

This is one of the most radical and defining teachings of Jesus about discipleship. He lays out three clear requirements:

1. Deny yourself
2. Take up your cross
3. Follow Him

Let’s break that down.

1. Denying Yourself Submitting Your Will to God’s

To deny yourself means to surrender your own desires, preferences, and personal ambitions in order to do God’s will. It’s a call to place God’s values, commandments, and purpose above your own feelings or opinions.

This isn’t about hating yourself it’s about letting go of self-centeredness.

Theologically:

Self-denial is the first step in genuine discipleship. It reflects repentance, which means turning from sin and selfishness toward God.

> *Romans 12:1 (NIV)*
> “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Real-life Examples:

- Choosing honesty over profit, even if it means financial loss.
- Dressing modestly as instructed in 1 Timothy 2:9, even if fashion trends say otherwise.
- Saying “no” to toxic friendships or environments that pull you away from God’s standards (see 1 Corinthians 15:33 – *“Bad company corrupts good character.”*)
- Giving up time spent on secular distractions (music, movies, social media) to pursue prayer, Scripture, or service.

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2. Taking Up Your Cross Willingness to Suffer for Christ

The cross in Jesus’ time wasn’t a religious symbol it was an instrument of death and suffering. To “take up your cross” is to accept hardship, persecution, or loss *for the sake of Christ.*

Jesus isn’t calling us to chase suffering, but to be ready to endure it if obedience to Him requires it.

This reflects identification with Christ’s suffering and an acknowledgment that following Him will often put you at odds with the world.

> *2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV)*
> “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

> *Philippians 1:29 (NIV)*
> “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.”

Real-life Examples:

- Being mocked for your faith in school or at work.
- Losing relationships because of your Christian convictions.
- Enduring financial or professional setbacks because you refuse to compromise God’s truth.

> *John 15:20 (NIV)*
> “Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”

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3. Following Jesus – Daily, Practical Obedience

Jesus ends with a simple command: *“Follow me.”* This means aligning every part of your life your relationships, your goals, your decisions with His teachings and example.

This is the essence of discipleship. It’s a lifelong journey of becoming more like Christ (see Luke 6:40) and walking in step with the Spirit (see Galatians 5:25).

It is not a one-time emotional decision but a continual walk of faith and obedience.

Why It Matters: The Value of the Soul

Jesus asks a profound question in Mark 8:36:

> “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

This reminds us that eternal life is more valuable than anything this world can offer. Our soul our eternal destiny is at stake. No amount of success, pleasure, or approval can replace a relationship with God.

To follow Jesus truly, you must:

Surrender your own will (deny yourself)
Be willing to suffer for your faith (carry your cross)
Obey Him daily (follow Him)

It’s not easy but it’s the only path to true life, purpose, and eternal salvation.

> *Luke 9:23 (NIV)* – “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

This life of self-denial and cross-bearing may be tough, but it’s

also filled with deep joy, peace, and purpose. And more importantly it leads to eternal life with Christ.

> *Romans 8:18 (NIV)*
> “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

May the Lord strengthen and guide you as you walk this path. Share this truth with others it’s life-giving.

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