

Volume

5

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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Victory Over Self

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GOD'S WAY OUT

1. Deny Yourself (Lk 9:23)

What does it mean to deny self?

Check the meaning of the word 'deny' in this scripture from several versions:

Forget self, say 'No' to yourself, disown yourself, loose sight of yourself and your own interests, refuse and give up yourself, renounce yourself, leave yourself behind, give up your rights to yourself, disregard yourself, put aside and ignore yourself.

Let's now look at each of these renderings one after the other.

a) **Forget yourself** (Mt 26:48-54; 27:12-14, 25-31; 1Pet 2:23)

Jesus, though Son of God, forgot Himself in the face of suffering, even though He had the power to defend Himself. Since the Father allowed the death on the cross to happen to Him, He refused to remember self and defend it even when He was crying for pain. He was insulted and it was painful to the flesh, yet He did not insult back. That's what it means to deny self.

What do you do when you are insulted or cheated?

b) **Say 'No' to yourself and refuse yourself.** (2Sam 16:5-12, 19:18-23)

David suffered insult and reproach unjustly from a subordinate. The self in Abishai, one of his followers, was aroused and he suggested revenge to David. Yet David will

not allow him-**self** to be provoked to anger. He said 'No' to the flesh and the insult calmly.

The Lord eventually defended him and made his adversary to bow before him. God defends only those who say 'No' to the self and refuse to defend self. You cannot be a follower of Christ until you learn to say 'no' to yourself and your own interests.

c) **Disown yourself** (Phil 3:4-9; Acts 16:1-3)

Paul had personal credentials that made him proud of himself and his tribe. Timothy, also, being a Greek, had credentials. Greeks are known for their wisdom (1Cor 1:21). Yet each of them had to disown himself and separate or dissociate himself from these credentials. They became nothing in order to follow Jesus.

What are your own credentials in life? Things you are so proud of. You cannot follow Jesus with such 'luggage'. The road is narrow; you must disown self.

d) **Leave yourself behind; give up all rights to yourself.**

(1Cor 9:3-6, 12-14; 1Kgs 19:19-21; Gen 11:26-29; 12:1-4)

Paul had the right to eat and drink wherever he preached the gospel. It is a God-given right. He had the right to get married and travel around with his wife preaching. Yet for the sake of the gospel he denied himself of all these; he gave up his rights in order to follow Jesus.

What rights do we normally claim and cling to in our society today? What rights have you been clinging to that will not allow you to follow Jesus wholly? Can you give it up?

- e) **Disregard and ignore yourself** (Jn 4:6-8,31-34; Acts 21:8-14)

Though hungry and tired Jesus disregarded and ignored the cry of self for hunger when He saw an opportunity to win the lost to the kingdom.

What do you do in your own case?

- f) **Look at men who refused to deny self**

Discussion Point

Discuss their experiences and the lessons you learnt from them.

- (i) *Jacob (Gen 25:31-34, 28:20, 29:18,25-30, 31:17-20, 32:6-8, 19,20)*
- (ii) *Gehazi (2Kgs 5:15-27)*
- (iii) *The rich young ruler (Mk 10:17-23)*

You gain nothing by clinging to the flesh. You cannot hold tightly to the flesh, and still hope to hold on to the Lord.

2. Hand Yourself Over To The Elders

This is an important analogy and instruction in order to have victory over self.

a) **You must be tired of yourself and its manifestations**

(Deut 21:18; Rom 7:13-24)

Have you truly seen the rottenness of your**self**? What efforts have you made in the past to stop the activities of the flesh in your life? What were the effects of such efforts on self? It is impossible to improve on self and make it please God.

b) **Lay hold on yourself** (Deut 21:19; Jer 17:9; Gal 5:19-21). By their fruit you shall know them. Identify the presence of the flesh in your life by its fruits, and its activities. Use these to lay hold on it.

c) **Bring yourself out to the elders of your city** (Deut 21: 19; Rom 8:29, 5:15; Heb 13:12,13). Don't cover up yourself; don't pamper it. Sin and the sinful nature thrive in darkness. Bring it out.

d) **...and say...**(Deut 21:20; Rom 10:10; Prov 28:13). Heart-felt prayers and confession with your mouth of the manifestations of the flesh in your life is very important. Hand over yourself to the Lord in this way and leave it there.

e) **Expect 'stones' on yourself from 'the men of your city'.**

What are these stones?

How should you respond to them? (Deut 21:21; Mt 27:26-32; Num 12:1-3).

The '**stones**' are actually allowed by God to prove your sincerity in handing over your **self**. Once you handover yourself, self

becomes to you as good as dead. To you it is already dead, but its death must be proved by the instrumentality of the '**stones**'. If you are sincere in your hand-over then you will gently submit to the men and the stones being hurled at you. If, on the other hand, you react against those throwing stones and quickly want to take back yourself, then your surrender is not genuine or sincere. Victory comes when you learn to say "No" to your **self**.

3. Knowing This...(Rom 6:6)

Put aside all strict rules and discipline you have employed in your ignorance to subdue your flesh. If righteousness comes by the law or by regulations and self-efforts, then Christ died in vain. Our deliverance is not by struggle. It is by faith, based on the knowledge of what God has done. It is by '**knowing this**'... There is a truth you must know in order to be delivered from your **self**. It will come to you by revelation.

- a) The pre-requisite for our deliverance is death (Rom 7:1-4; 6:5,7,8). God, who knew this, went all the way to meet that requirement through His Son Jesus Christ. We were married to 'Mr Flesh' and could only be free by death. But thank God who made His Son to taste that death on our behalf. The hold of your former 'husband', the flesh, ended when Jesus took him to the cross.

- b) Jesus Christ paid the price (of death) for our deliverance from the grip of the flesh. Your **self** was crucified with Him. (Heb 2:9, 14,15; 2Cor 5:14,15; Isa 53:4-6; Rom 6:6; Gal 2:20,21).

When Jesus died you died with Him. That death He died was the death you needed to die in order to end your relationship with the old man and be free to 'marry' Jesus and serve God in righteousness and holiness all the days of your life.

c) You are dead (2Cor 5:14; Col 3:3; Gal 2:20)

How then are you dead? 1Cor 6:19,20.

The truth is that you are dead, but a new man is living in you now. He is the Lord Jesus. He bought you so that He can live in you and walk in you in this world. The new creation reality is that you are not the one that is still alive, but Christ who has entered inside of you to live there. The life you lived before you met Christ (your natural life) became terminated on the day you met Christ and got born again.

d) What is the effect of your death with Christ (on the cross) over your relationship with your **self**? (Rom 6:6,7,14; 7:4,5; Col 3:4).

You are dead, and he that is dead is free from sin. The embodiment of sin (flesh) has been destroyed. The stronghold of sin over your life has been shattered. The works of flesh in your life are the things he uses to have a stronghold over your life. That hold has been destroyed. Sin has no more power over you. The flesh shall no more be your master. You now have power to say 'No' to the flesh and you are free to obey Christ.

e) Christ's purpose in dying for us is very clear. It is so that henceforth you will not live for your **self**, the old man in you. If you refuse to bear any fruit of sin for Mr Flesh, now you are justified.

Even physically a dead man is free from the control of sin and the devil. Self and Satan cannot influence or oppress a dead man. And you have actually died! You were in Christ when He died and paid the penalty of sin on the cross.

“Wherefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ..” (Rom 7:4)

But why am I still alive? It is not 'I' that is alive but Christ that lives in me, walks, talks, eats, reads, etc, in me. It is for a purpose: to bear fruit for the new 'husband', Jesus Christ. Christ lives in me in order to fulfill His purpose. My response to this truth is to refuse to obey my '**self**' or live for my '**self**' constantly every day.

However, my victory must not stop there. My victory will not be victorious just by saying 'No' to self and stopping there. Saying 'No' to your self is like sweeping your life clean and empty (Lk 11:24-26). If you stop there the devil and all those habits of the flesh will revisit your body. If there is no new occupant they will return with a vengeance.

As you say 'No' to your 'self' you must immediately say 'Yes' to Christ every moment of everyday. You present your body to Him, not as a dead, useless sacrifice but as a living, useful sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him.

Go ahead and find out everyday what the Lord wants you to do, and do it with joy. Don't just put off the old man and his works but put on the new man and his fruit. That is the evidence of a genuine victory over the flesh.

4. The New Creation Life – How It Works

(2Cor 5:17; Rom 6:2,11; Col 2:20-23)

People still see you – your old tabernacle – walking around, and so they take it for granted that it is still you, the former you. The friends and apprentices of your dead 'old man' (Gal 5:19-21) and the devil himself know that the 'self' is dead but they would come through various means to ask for their dead colleague as if he were still alive in you.

What they are really doing is demanding you show proof of his death. You don't need any proof. All you need to do is simply to inform every visitor (whether sin, sickness, the devil, etc) who knocks at the door of your life, asking for the old man (i.e. trying to provoke the old man into his usual action), and say, "sorry, the old man is dead". "He has passed away. It is a New Man – the Lord from heaven who is here now".

If the visitor begs you further, you can query him: "How can I who was dead (to sin) live any longer (in it)? Rom 6:2. Mr 'I' is no

longer here. Why are you looking for the dead among the living? “It is no longer ‘I’ that lives but Christ that lives in me”. It is your duty to answer back.

Rise up today, wherever you are, announce it loud and clear that it is no longer self but Christ that lives in you. It is this reckoning that brings this great provision of God for our deliverance into reality (Rom 6:11), “for the just shall live by faith”. The devil might have cheated you for a long time due to ignorance and unbelief. But no more, the truth shall set you free.

Personal Assessment Questions

1. *When temptations come your way, what actually are they asking for?*
2. *(a) Discuss the temptations and provocations that have come your way since you started this study.
(b) How did you handle them? Did you at any point take back 'self' from the 'Elders' because of the stones? Share with us.*
3. *What works of the old man have you packed out of your life?*
4. *Did you notice any tendency in you to begin to identify and talk about the self in another person instead of carrying your own cross?*
5. *What other experiences resulting from this study do you have to share with us for further counsel and admonition?*