

## Session 5

- What part of the teaching had the most impact on you?

### Friday: Choosing the Cross

In facing his death, Jesus wasn't a victim of forces beyond his control- he had options. He could fight like the zealots, withdraw like the Essenes, collaborate with the chief priests, cut a deal with Pilate, or call on God to be delivered.

Instead, he chose to die out of love for others. Here is how he explained it to his disciples:

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.... The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded. (John 10:11, 17-18 NLT)*

- Why do you think it matters so much that Jesus' disciples understand that he is making a sacrificial choice from a position of authority?

After predicting his own death, Jesus uses the means of his death-a cross-to describe the sacrificial choice he expects his followers to make:

*Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." (Luke 9:23 - 24 NLT)*

We may suffer many things in life, but they aren't necessarily Crosses. By Jesus' definition, a cross is only a cross if you choose it. It is a decision made from a position of authority - you could choose otherwise, but you don't. For love of Christ, you crawl up on the altar and consent to die to self-will, self-gratification, self-protection - daily.

- How do you recognize the distinction between suffering and taking up your cross in your own life? For example, what are the unique demands of each? What are the unique ways that each has the potential to increase or diminish faith and spiritual growth?
- Do you think it's possible to take an experience of suffering (something we did not choose) and allow it to become a cross - something we choose and submit to for love of Christ? Share the reasons for your response.
- Jesus describes taking up one's cross as a daily choice, a habit practiced in the routines of everyday life and relationships. As you think back over the last day or two, what opportunities did you have to take up your cross - to make a loving, sacrificial choice? How did you respond? What happened as a result?

### **Saturday: Waiting**

John Ortberg suggests the biggest miracle might be Saturday. The miracle of Saturday is the eternal Son of God lays dead. He defeats our great enemy death not by proclaiming his invincibility over it, but by submitting himself to it.

- If Saturday in Jesus' story is also a miracle, what implications do you think it has for us as Jesus followers? In the life of faith, what would you say is the miracle of the silent, in-between times?

All three-day stories share a structure. On the first day there is trouble, on the third day there is deliverance; on the second day, there is nothing. Silence.

- As you look back over your life, are there experiences or seasons you would describe as a three-day story? Within that experience, how would you characterize "Saturday" - the time of continued trouble, silence, and confusion?
- In what ways, if any, would you say you are in a Saturday Season now? How would you characterize your response to it-as despair, denial, waiting, or something else?

## **Sunday: Hope to Die For**

Jesus released a new kind of hope-hope that called people to die to the lesser life of a lesser self so that a greater self might be born.

- Where are you most aware of a need for this kind of hope in your life right now? What lesser thing do you sense God may be asking you to die to?
- What would you say is the most significant thing you learned about Jesus and his influence on the world through this study? How has what you've learned impacted you (for example, in your attitudes, behaviors, relationships, etc.)?