



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

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.”

Mark 8:34

Rebel #4 – The weight

Many things make it hard to follow Jesus. We’ve talked about some of them this month. There are more that we haven’t even talked about. There are the temptations the world holds out as a lure. There is the direct opposition the world brings, for we believe things the world directly opposes. The devil is constantly after us like a roaring lion. So much is stacked against us as we live for Jesus and rebel against this world and its ways.

Those struggles are hard enough, and then Jesus adds one more. “Deny yourself.” In other words, Jesus is calling us to put others ahead of ourselves. We are not first, Jesus is. We are not even second, everyone else is. Which means—we are always last! “Deny yourself.”

We want “me” time, to be taken care of, and to have our turn. We want what is good for us. It’s what we want. But Jesus says, “Deny yourself. I’m first. They’re next. You are always last.”

But we want what’s good for us. We want our way the way we want it and when we want it. Jesus says, “Deny yourself. What I want for you is what you should always want.”

This is the cross that Jesus gives us to carry, the cross of self-denial. Yes, this is the cross Jesus calls us to carry as we follow him.

As we step under the weight of our cross and learn to say “God your way is best, and I trust you,” then we find contentment and even joy in the life that God gives us. When we learn to say, “God, I will give up my wants for the good of the people around me,” then we find that God will provide for us in ways that we didn’t even imagine with even more than we could have thought.

The weight of the cross and the struggle against it drives us to our knees so that we rely on God and on him alone. When God is all we have, we learn that God is all we need. He gives us salvation, support, and strength. He gives us all that we need.

So, step under that cross and accept in faith whatever God gives. Step under that cross and deny yourself as you live with other people.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, you call me to deny myself, take up my cross and follow you. O Jesus, it is hard and heavy. I ask you to give me strength to carry this cross. As I do, draw me closer to you, knowing you meet all my needs. Amen.