Lord, I am willing to receive what you give,
to release what you take,
to lack what you withhold,
to do what you require,
to be who you desire.

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, Spiritual Disciplines Handbook

Deny yourself

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. *NIV*

Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. *Holman*

Then he told them what they could expect for themselves: “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead.

You’re not in the driver’s seat—I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. *The Message*

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to follow Me [as My disciple], he must deny himself [set aside selfish interests], and take up his cross daily [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me]. *Amplified*

What has been happening with Jesus and his disciples?

Jesus sends out the apostles with power and authority over demons and diseases and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Herod is perplexed by Jesus and seeks to see him.

Jesus seeks to withdraw apart with the disciples. Instead, he feeds the five thousand.

Jesus: “Who do you say I am?”
Peter: “You are the Christ.”

Jesus foretells his death.

The Demands of Discipleship

"Jesus spoke of his own suffering and death and is calling on his followers to participate in the same self-giving. Not only for the Twelve, but for all disciples. Luke is addressing the reader who has heard Jesus speak to the Twelve and is also in the position to hear Jesus speak of following him in self-denial. The only person able to grasp the meaning of 23-27 is the reader! This is what draws 18-22 and 23-27 together—discipleship. (Fred Craddock, *Interpretation/Luke*)

Jesus shares three parallel, proverb-ish sayings.

Deny yourself. Take up your cross daily. Follow me.

What does he mean? What does this look like?

How would we know we are living like this?

How would others detect or recognize these commitments and practices in our lives?

Jesus says more…

Verse 24: “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

- Self-centeredness is finally counter productive and destructive, severing one from the resources that give life.

Verse 25: “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”

- This is painfully confirmed in every tragic case of unrestrained greed.

Verse 26: “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

- The one of whom you are ashamed today will be your judge tomorrow.

Whatever you sow you will reap. Saving life by losing it *“for my sake.”*

Then Jesus tells them that there are some standing there who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.

Eight days after these sayings, Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah.

“This is my Son, My Chosen One; listen to him.”

Luke 9:28-35

Deny yourself. Submit. Surrender.

The person who wants to be Jesus' disciple (follow: come after) can only be said to do so when he had made and implemented a radical decision to deny himself. Pair it with confessing (acknowledging and identifying ourselves with) Christ and denying ourselves: **we will not set our desires and our will against the right Christ has to our lives**.

(Walter L. Liefeld, *Expositor's/Vol. 8*)

Accept an agenda not of my own making.

"What freedom corresponds to submission? **It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way**. The obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go is one of the greatest bondages in human society today."

(Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline)*

Lay down the terrible burden of having to have my own way.

Renunciation

Renunciation is the ancient spiritual practice of setting aside a lesser love for a time [in order] to awaken a deeper desire for the eternal love of God.

The wilderness is equally a geographical and metaphorical landscape in Scripture, just as renunciation is a physical act for a spiritual purpose.

As Desert Father Abba Paphnutius said, “A renunciation… in body alone… will not do us any good, if we do not succeed in achieving that renunciation in heart, which is far higher and more valuable.”

(Lectio 365, March 2026)

Purgation: a renunciation of all blatant inconsistencies with wholeness in Christ.

Invitation to a Journey, M. Robert Mulholland, 97

A warning to those who seek to order their world and maintain control of their lives:

- **Such persons cannot be the persons God intends them to be.** They are imprisoned by the need to maintain control of their existence.
- **Such persons cannot be God's persons for others.** They are captive to the need to protect themselves against others and manipulate others for their own purposes.
- **Such persons cannot be agents of God's grace to a broken and hurting world.** They are in bondage to the need to impose their order on the world."

Who lived like that? St. Patrick.

Saint Patrick was born 387 AD possibly in Kilpatrick, Scotland, returned to Ireland in 432, and died March 17, 461in Downpatrick, Ireland. He converted much of Ireland from paganism and Druidism to Christianity. He is depicted with his foot on a snake in reference to his expulsion of all snakes from Ireland.

True/false:

Patrick was Irish.

Patrick really wanted to go to Ireland.

He went once because of pirates. He went the second time because of God.

He did not want to go either time.

(*People Whose Faith Got Them Into Trouble, IVP)*

Quotations from the *Confessions* of the "Holy-Boy."

"Any that happens to me, whether pleasant or distasteful, I ought to accept it with equanimity giving thanks to God, who never disappoints."

"Love and reverence for God came to me more and more, building up my faith so much that daily I would pray a hundred times or more. Even while working in the woods or on the mountain, I woke up to pray before dawn… Now I understand that this was the fervent Spirit praying within me."

"I did not go back to Ireland of my own accord. It is not in my own nature to show divine mercy toward the very ones who once enslaved me."

"[Returning as a missionary] was the furthest things from me, but God made me fit, causing me to care about and labour for the salvation of others."

"Leaving my home and family was a costly price to pay; but afterwards, I received a more valuable thing: the gift of knowing and loving God."

"The only reason I had to return to the people I once barely escaped from was the Gospel and its promises."

Patrick's Breastplate

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all who love me,
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.

Prayer of **Trustful** Abandonment

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures -
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

Charles de Foucauld

The Spiritual Discipline of Detachment: Nurturing the spirit of trust that is attached to God alone.

There was nothing Jesus was more attached to than his Father. God came before his mission, his disciples or his family… Jesus knows all about the discipline of detachment. (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*)

Where do you see detachment in the life of Jesus?

And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed, saying,

"If you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Luke 22:41-44

Exploring the discipline/freedom of Detachment.

Reflection Questions

How do you handle failure and weakness, suffering and loss?

What are some specific ways in which mistakes and failures have worked for your good?

When has loss made God more real to you?

What about yourself are you most attached to?

Imagine a testimonial dinner in your honor. What would you like people to say about you?

Spiritual Exercises

Take an attachment inventory.

Practice letting go by giving away something you are attached to.

Walk through your home or office, and in your mind give all you have to God. Tell him that you could live without the things you see.

Recognize your attachment to labels.

Where in your life do you need to pray, “Not my will, but yours be done”?

Ask God to give you opportunity to become more detached from secondary things.

Psalm 131

A song of ascents. Of David.

1 My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.

2 But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.

3 Israel, put your hope in the LORD
both now and forevermore.