

They will likely tell you they are buried is the only possible result of putting myself under such self-imposed laws. I LOSE real life in Christ because I seek to save myself through my own efforts.

### "Carrying Our Cross Daily"



The instrument of death God offers us is our cross. Jesus said, "If any man would be My disciple, he must pick up his cross and follow Me." This is not a one time event. It is a continual process. We are to walk through life carrying a cross. This does not take away from the fact that, in Christ, we do die all at once. It simply

means the instrument of death God offers us is our cross. Jesus said, "If any man would be My disciple, he must pick up his cross and follow Me." This is not a one time event. It is a continual process. We are to walk through life carrying a cross. This does not take away from the fact that, in Christ, we die all at once. It simply means that there is a process by which His death must be worked out and made manifest. Through the continual "Losing Of My Life," it is worked out. And as His death is made manifest in our life, so is His life.

Taking up the cross and following Jesus can sound like one miserable lifestyle. But what it means is that you put God first. You come to Him with your life and say, "All right, Lord. Here are my goals. Here are my dreams. Here are my aspirations, as well as my weaknesses and my shortcomings and sins. I believe Your plans are better than mine in the long run, so I dedicate my life to You." For if I will "Lose My Life" for Jesus' sake, I will find it in Him. Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." —Luke 9:23-24

### "The Power To Reach It"



Having spiritual maturity involves being sensitive to the power and leadership of God's Spirit. As we grow in grace and knowledge, and obey God with our whole heart, His Spirit grows as well. The more of God's Spirit we have, the faster we will become the spiritually mature Christians God desires for all His children. If we allow God to shape and define our worth, we are free to empty ourselves without the fear of losing ourselves. Our value comes not finally from what we bring to the table, but from the One Who brought us there.

### "Spiritual Journey"



At the heart of the spiritual journey is the understanding that it is a journey. None of us are perfect. Once we become believers, we are not expected to achieve instant spiritual maturity. Rather, the Christian life is a process involving both our 'ATTENTION' (2 Corinthians 7:1) "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God." and 'GOD'S WORK' in us (Philippians 1:6). "I

am confident of this, that the One Who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." And it has more to do with 'OPPORTUNITY' and 'INTENTIONALITY' than with age (1 Timothy 4:12) "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Author John Bunyan, in his book The Pilgrim's Progress, pictured the spiritual journey as a road full of trials, dangers, and blessings, starting with the cross and ending at the Celestial City.

### "Deep Calls To Deep"



"Growing Closer To The Lord Is The Most Important Thing In Your Life." More important than reaching your dreams or even fulfilling your calling. Everything you do in life flows from everything you are in Christ. Mature Christians don't sit idle in their faith, and assume God will do all the work inside them, when God has clearly called them to "make every effort" to draw near to Him. The Bible makes it clear that we can grow in our faith and in holiness. It is not a linear path, where we are continually helpless and have no part to play. God tells us we can make steps forward towards Him, and is always calling us closer, deeper into His ways. A quote from Richard Foster, "The desperate need today is

not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people." Deep people are those whose lives are organized around Jesus, His character, His call to serve, and His death on the cross for their sins. "Deep calls to deep at the thunder of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and Your billows have gone over me. By day the LORD commands His steadfast love, and at night His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life." (Psalm 42:7,8)

"Losing Your Life to Find It"

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:35) Jesus is talking about losing your life. He is talking about how to find true life in God. So certainly, if we don't get this right, nothing else is going to be right in our Christian life either. This verse is clearly talking about the most important thing imaginable: Life in Christ. And it's telling us how to either lose or find it. Jesus is stating, in this one sentence, a principle of the Kingdom of God which is so important that it might be said that it is the governing principle. It is, in fact, a description of how creation functions. Embodied in this one statement of Jesus is the plan of salvation, the process of growth, and the revelation of what the relationship between God and His church is supposed to be. In this verse is the How and the Why of these realities. Jesus says, "If you want to find your life, then lose it. But if you want to lose your life, then try to save it." If we put this down as a simple equation, we get this:

Seek To SAVE Your Life = LOSE It.  
LOSE Your Life In Christ = SAVE (Find) It



"We Must Choose"

This is the opposite of how human nature thinks. We think that to gain our lives we must save them. We think that if we let go of our lives that we will surely lose them. This is natural and understandable. But it is wrong. Simply put, Jesus is talking about self-ownership. He is telling us that we must lose our ownership of ourselves. We must lose control of our lives. All of that

must die. It must be unconditionally surrendered into the hands of God. If we do surrender, then we will experience what real life in Christ is all about. We'll actually experience resurrection in Jesus. This is what Jesus is saying in layman terms, "I have called you for a purpose. You had nothing to do with it. It was completely by My grace. But now that I have called you, you must choose. You must choose to either surrender yourself to Me, or hold onto yourself." No one can unconditionally surrender to God unless they believe Him. This is, therefore, a call for faith. But even that is something God will grant us a measure of by His grace. Losing one's life in Christ is therefore one of the easiest things possible for us -- although our flesh will resist our choice. Yet we must do it, both in the overall sense as a commitment to God, and on a daily basis, as we carry our Cross behind Jesus Christ.

"A Work of Grace"

Never think that God has called us by His grace only to leave everything else up to us afterwards. No. God calls us by His grace and then works in us by His grace. Nothing is up to us except one thing: Surrender. It is up to us to lose our life in His purposes. It is up to us to take up our Cross. HOW do we surrender? Surrender first takes place as an act of will. When God brings us to the place where we see He wants a surrender, we must first choose to believe and trust Him. Then we must actually choose to unconditionally surrender our lives to Him. We must say, "Into your hands do I commit my spirit." And then, if we really mean what we have said, we must obey accordingly. We must "work out" our surrender in whatever form is necessary. The consequences of our surrender, and of our obedience, we must then leave with God.

"We Will Grow A Little Deeper Everyday"

Ultimately, we must choose. I must choose to either save my life, or lose it for Christ. I must do this in many "Little" ways each day. But then there will be the "Big" ways -- those crisis points in which I will either go on with God in a deeper way, or regress to a point where God must start all over with me. It is never too late to repent and surrender to God. There is no sin I can commit, nor any bad choice which I can make which is too deep for the Redemption of Jesus Christ and the full forgiveness of God to reach. It is never too late to lose your life in Jesus Christ.

"Ownership"

"Losing my life for Jesus' sake" means exactly what the phrase suggests: I must lose my life. This means that I don't control it anymore. In fact, we no longer know where our life is, or where it is going. Yet we trust the One Who is leading. We trust the One Who is in control. This issue is clearly a matter of ownership. Who owns me? Have I staked a claim of ownership upon any part of my existence? Have I reserved for myself the right to have the final word regarding anything about myself? Do I operate under the spirit of self-ownership? If I do, then I am seeking to SAVE my life -- seeking to OWN my life. I am on the throne, at least partially. I have set limits upon the access I will give to God. When we think of examples of how we might seek to save ourselves, or be our own boss, there are some which are quite obvious. For instance, if I am trying to maintain myself with God through my own works, I am obviously trying to save myself. I may not call it that, or even bring salvation into my thinking. But as long as my works are my basis for standing before God, I am seeking to save myself. And the only result possible is that I will LOSE my life. This is exactly what happens, too. Ask anyone who has spent years trying to live up to their self-imposed standards for walking with Christ.