



Week 4 - Practice

Pick Up Your Cross and Follow

Jesus calls us to follow him, not just “believe” in him. Following Jesus means being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did ... but it doesn’t end there. There are all sorts of passages in the New Testament filled with invitations and tools to help shape us into his disciples.

Begin with silence and prayer (5 minutes)

Gather together as a Community in a comfortable setting (around a table, on the couch, the floor of a living room, etc.). Say a quick prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together. Then spend a few minutes in silence. Why silence, even while together? It’s because we live in a busy, noisy world, under a non-stop assault of distraction. In the midst of all the chaos, it’s hard at times to hear the voice of God, and that of our brothers and sisters. As we gather together as a family, we want to hear what the Father is saying to and *through* each of us, and respond in turn. A great way to do that is to begin each time with silence and prayer.

Pick Up Your Cross (10-30 minutes)

Here’s the practice for the coming week: First...

1. Identify a time/place that works well for you

- Time: For most people, first thing in the morning works best. You’re rested, fresh, and the day is young. For others, a more optimal time slot is when kids are napping in the late morning, or

on a lunch break, after work, or before you go to bed. Feel free to experiment until you find the right fit.

- Place: Find a place that is quiet and as distraction free as possible. A comfortable chair with a blanket and candle nearby works well for a lot of people. Weather permitting, a park or nature reserve are also a good bet.

Then, for the practice...

2. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable.

3. Begin with reading the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

- Take your time reading through this prayer and read it aloud.

4. Grab a journal and a pen, and take some time reflecting on all the way God has blessed your life. Take 5-10 minutes to write some of them down.

- What do you notice about your list?
- Are there any areas in your list that seem to consume your life?
- Take some time journaling through some of the areas in your life that God may be calling you to "deny."

Prayer (15-20 minutes)

Following Jesus is rooted in prayer. It is how we abide in the vine and allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through us. For this prayer, take time to think of the areas in your life where you need to "deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow.

As you offer up those areas to God in prayer, place your hands out facing down through out the prayer, as if you are dropping those areas before God. Take time to be silent through this portion as well, as the Holy Spirit may bring those areas to light

After this first portion of the prayer, enter into a new posture of hands facing upward, as if waiting to receive a gift. Start in silence and simply sit in the posture of receiving. Stay in this posture, and thank God for

all the areas of your life where he has made himself known. Ask for more ways and opportunities to encounter the living God in our city.