

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: Who Do You Say I Am?

Devotional

Have you ever been in a conversation where someone asked what you thought about a controversial topic, and you found yourself looking around to see what others would say first? It's natural to want to gauge the room before we commit to an answer. But Jesus cuts through all of that when he asks his disciples the most important question they'll ever face.

After asking what the crowds were saying about him, Jesus turns the spotlight directly on his followers: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Peter's response wasn't based on popular opinion polls or cultural trends. It came from personal relationship and revelation - "God's Messiah."

This moment reveals something profound about authentic faith. It's not enough to know what others think about Jesus or even what the church teaches about him. At some point, each of us must answer this question for ourselves. Your relationship with Jesus cannot be borrowed from your parents, your pastor, or your Christian friends. It must be yours.

Peter's declaration wasn't just theological knowledge - it was personal conviction born from walking with Jesus, watching him, and experiencing his love firsthand. When we truly encounter Jesus as God's Messiah, everything changes. Our priorities shift, our perspectives broaden, and our purpose becomes clear.

Today, Jesus is asking you the same question he asked Peter. Not what your denomination says, not what your family believes, not what's trending on social media - but what do YOU say about who Jesus is? Your answer to this question will determine the trajectory of your entire life.

Bible Verse

"Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?'" - Luke 9:18

Reflection Question

If Jesus asked you personally, "Who do you say I am?" how would you answer, and what experiences or moments in your life have shaped that answer?

Quote

But what about you? He asks, who do you say I am? Peter answered, God's Messiah.

Prayer

Jesus, help me move beyond secondhand faith to a personal, authentic relationship with you. Give me the courage to answer honestly who I believe you are, not based on what others expect, but on my own encounter with your love and truth. Amen.

Day 2: The Daily Cross

Devotional

"Take up your cross daily." These words from Jesus might be some of the most misunderstood in all of Scripture. We often think of the cross as our burdens - a difficult job, a challenging relationship, or a health struggle. But Jesus is talking about something much more radical and transformative.

In Jesus' time, everyone knew what a cross meant. It was an instrument of execution, a symbol of complete surrender of one's own will and life. When Jesus says to take up your cross daily, he's not talking about enduring hardships. He's talking about a daily decision to die to yourself - your agenda, your pride, your need to be right, your comfort zones.

The word "daily" is crucial here. This isn't a one-time decision made at an altar call or during a baptism. It's a choice we make every morning when we wake up, every moment when we're faced with a decision between our way and Jesus' way. It's choosing forgiveness when we want revenge, choosing service when we want to be served, choosing humility when we want recognition.

This daily cross-carrying is what separates true discipleship from casual Christianity. It's the difference between admiring Jesus from a distance and actually following him into the messy, beautiful, challenging work of transformation. When we take up our cross daily, we discover something amazing - the life we thought we were losing is actually the life that was holding us back from the abundant life Jesus offers.

Discipleship isn't about perfection; it's about direction. Every day, we get a fresh opportunity to choose Jesus' way over our own.

Bible Verse

"He said to them, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'" - Luke 9:23

Reflection Question

What specific area of your life feels most challenging to "die to" daily, and what would it look like to surrender that area to Jesus today?

Quote

He said to them, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Prayer

Lord, give me the strength to take up my cross daily. Help me recognize the areas where I'm still holding onto my own will instead of surrendering to yours. Make me willing to die to myself so I can truly live for you. Amen.

Day 3: Beyond Good Behavior

Devotional

Many of us grew up thinking that being a good Christian meant following the rules, being nice to people, and avoiding the "big" sins. While these things aren't wrong, they fall far short of what Jesus calls discipleship. True discipleship goes much deeper than behavior modification - it's about heart transformation.

In ancient Jewish culture, becoming a disciple was the highest honor a young person could receive. It meant complete surrender and submission to the rabbi's way of thinking, living, and being. Disciples didn't just learn information; they absorbed their teacher's entire worldview and lifestyle. They wanted to become like their rabbi in every way possible.

As followers of Jesus, we're called to this same level of commitment. It's not enough to simply avoid doing bad things or even to do good things. We're called to think like Jesus thinks, love like Jesus loves, and see the world through Jesus' eyes. This requires us to examine not just our actions, but our motivations, our attitudes, and our deepest beliefs.

This kind of transformation doesn't happen overnight, and it certainly doesn't happen through willpower alone. It happens as we spend time with Jesus, study his teachings, and allow his Spirit to work in us. It happens as we surrender our need to be right and instead seek to be like him.

When we embrace this deeper call to discipleship, we discover that following Jesus isn't about restriction - it's about freedom. Freedom from the exhausting work of trying to be good enough, and freedom to become who we were truly created to be.

Bible Verse

"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'" - Luke 9:23

Reflection Question

In what ways might you be settling for "good behavior" instead of pursuing the heart transformation that Jesus desires for your life?

Quote

As disciples of Jesus, I believe that we're called to so much more than simple, good, moral living.

Prayer

Jesus, I don't want to settle for surface-level Christianity. Transform my heart, not just my behavior. Help me surrender completely to your way of thinking and living, trusting that your way is always better than mine. Amen.

Day 4: Laying Down Our Filters

Devotional

We all see the world through filters - our upbringing, our theological training, our political beliefs, and our personality. These aren't necessarily bad things, but they become problematic when we use them to reshape Jesus into someone who always agrees with us rather than allowing Jesus to reshape us.

Think about it: if your Jesus always agrees with your political views, always confirms your theological positions, and never challenges your preferences, you might not be following the real Jesus. You might be following a version of Jesus that you've created to make yourself comfortable.

True discipleship requires the courage to lay down these filters when they conflict with Jesus' teachings. This doesn't mean abandoning all beliefs or preferences, but it does mean being willing to examine them honestly. Are we filtering Jesus' teachings through our existing beliefs, or are we filtering our beliefs through Jesus' teachings?

This is uncomfortable work. It means being willing to have our minds changed, our perspectives challenged, and our comfort zones disrupted. It means admitting that we might be wrong about some things we've held dear. But this is exactly what discipleship requires - the humility to let Jesus be Lord over every area of our lives, including our deeply held convictions.

When we do this hard work of laying down our filters, something beautiful happens. We discover that Jesus is bigger, more complex, and more wonderful than any box we could put him in. We find freedom from the exhausting work of defending our positions and instead find joy in simply following him.

Bible Verse

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." - Luke 9:20

Reflection Question

Which of your personal filters (upbringing, theology, politics, or personality) do you find most difficult to examine or potentially lay down when they conflict with Jesus' teachings?

Quote

Are we willing to lay aspects of those things down if they don't align with the teachings of Jesus?

Prayer

Lord, help me have the courage to examine my beliefs and preferences honestly. Show me where I might be reshaping you to fit my comfort zone instead of allowing you to transform me. Give me the humility to lay down anything that doesn't align with your truth. Amen.

Day 5: Simple, Not Easy

Devotional

Jesus' call to discipleship is beautifully simple: surrender to him, adopt his heart and behavior toward others, then show others how to do the same. Three steps. That's it. But simple doesn't mean easy.

The beauty of this simplicity is that it cuts through all the confusion about what discipleship means. You don't need a theology degree or years of Bible study to get started. You don't need to have all your questions answered or all your doubts resolved. You just need to be willing to surrender, to love like Jesus loves, and to help others do the same.

But here's where it gets challenging: surrender is a daily choice that goes against every instinct we have for self-preservation and control. Adopting Jesus' heart means loving people who hurt us, serving those who don't deserve it, and choosing forgiveness when we want justice. Showing others how to do the same requires vulnerability, patience, and the courage to live authentically.

The encouraging truth is that Jesus doesn't expect us to do this perfectly or all at once. Discipleship is a journey, not a destination. Every day we get new opportunities to surrender a little more, love a little deeper, and help others take their next steps toward Jesus.

Remember, the goal isn't to create perfect people but to create disciples who are becoming more like Jesus. And that transformation happens not through our effort alone, but through the power of God's Spirit working in and through us as we take these simple, daily steps of faith.

Bible Verse

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." - Luke 9:23

Reflection Question

Of the three simple steps of discipleship (surrender, adopt Jesus' heart, show others), which one feels most challenging for you right now, and what's one small step you could take today?

Quote

His idea of discipleship is simple. It's not easy, but it is simple. Surrender to him, adopt his heart and behavior towards others, then show others how to do the same thing.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you that discipleship is simple even when it's not easy. Help me take the next step in surrendering to you, loving like you love, and helping others discover the joy of following you. Give me patience with myself and others as we all learn to become more like you. Amen.