LEADERSHIP LESSON #15 - FAITH...TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

LESSON

Many people interpret "cross" as some burden they must carry in their lives: a strained relationship, a thankless job, a physical illness etc. But this is not what Jesus meant when He said, "Take up your cross and follow Me." In context, when Jesus said to take up your cross, the disciples only thought of one thing: Horrible suffering, pain and death. Jesus is saying, "This is how extreme your devotion has to be. This is willingness to endure persecution. This is willingness to endure hatred, hostility, rejection, reproach, shame, suffering even death." They knew exactly what He was talking about. And be ready to do it every day. Every day.

EXPLANATION

How many people respond to the pure Gospel message with an attitude of, "Here's my life, and if it means life, okay. If it means death, okay. I don't really care. I'm so desperate. I want Your forgiveness. I want eternal life. Whatever the price, I will give all." How many people recognize (or are informed) that to follow Jesus may mean loss of friends, family, reputation, career, and possibly even their life"? Such a call is what Jesus meant when He said, "Take up your cross and follow Me."

APPLICATION

Following Jesus doesn't necessarily mean all these things will happen to you, but His message is clear: there must be a "willingness" to take up your cross? If there comes a point in your life where you are faced with a choice – Jesus or the comforts of this life – which will you choose?

Following Jesus is easy when life runs smoothly; our true commitment to Him is revealed during trials. In John 16:33, Jesus assures us that trials will come to His followers, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Jesus never hid the sacrifices necessary for discipleship. It's been said that a person is either going through a trial, has just come out of one or is getting ready to enter one. May we never buy into the notion that coming to Christ for salvation is simply raising a hand or signing a card. We are not joining a club or becoming members of an elite, religious group. To come to Jesus Christ is to come to the end of self and sin and to become so desirous of Christ and His righteousness that any and every sacrifice is made for Him.

DIRECTION

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23)